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A Walk On
The Edge™
An Interview
With Nigel
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PLOTWERKS™ #2
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ISSUE TWENTY POINT

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SHADIS
The Independent Games Magazine
PRESENTS

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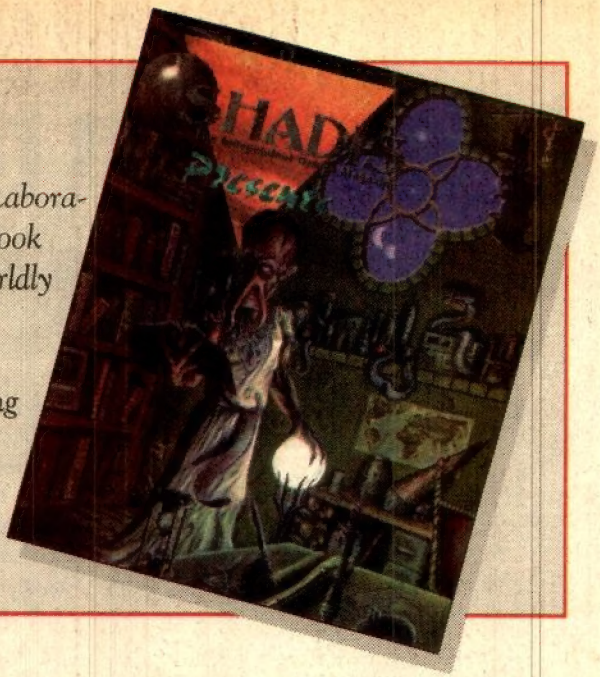
About the Cover:

Ellym Sirac's "Mad Utog's Laboratory" gives us an unsettling look into the world of an otherworldly sorceror. Utog appears to be studying a back issue of SHADIS while contemplating some sinister fate for Elvis's brain. Let's hope the King doesn't return from this one.



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Amendment: This policy does not apply to **SHADIS PRESENTS**. ❑

Cries From the Attic

Editorial of a Madman

Okay, so who are they?

Having just returned from DragonCon and gearing up for GenCon, I find myself shaking my head. I don't know why I'm always surprised when I venture out to the conventions. Perhaps it's because of all the ungodly amounts of man-hours that go into the typical issue of Shadis. All those nights banging away at the keyboard while a half-eaten Big Mac and a warm cup of Coke sit ignored nearby. Yeah, I'm sure that's why I get this strange gut-reaction to scream when gamer after gamer walks up to our booth and says, "Knights of the Dinner Table is great! Keep up the good work!"

Last year I was asked for my autograph for the first time at a convention. I eagerly pulled out my pen thinking I was about to sign an early issue of SHADIS. To my surprise a KODT #1 comic book was shoved at me. Okay, so I'm the guy who does 'that' comic strip.

In the past few months I've been approached about a T-shirt license, miniatures and even greeting cards! Why all the interest in a group of self-professed losers and no-lifes?

I think the answer can be found in the form of a single question. A question I get asked a dozen times or so at every con. "Who are those guys based on? They remind me of my own group."

I usually shrug and say, "Oh, they're just a montage of players and GMs I've known over the years." Perhaps that answer is a bit too simplistic if not a touch dishonest.

The truth is, the guys of the KODT are based on my own pioneering group. They don't look like the guys I played with but to be sure all of their personalities and quirks are there.

Brian the argumentative rules-lawyer is none other than my long-time friend Joel Bozell, who invariably could quote the page number and often times the paragraph where a particular rule in question could be found. The fact that he was always right caused many a GM to turn red-faced behind those screens.

Bob the temperamental and excitable hack-'n'-slasher is based largely on Lew Herring (who is credited with introducing me to AD&D™ and the world of role-playing). If you ever run into Lew at a convention have him show you how he used to read a four sided die - you'll see Bob written all over his face. Be forewarned, Lew will deny any connection with Bob or any of the other guys of the KODT. Pity.

Dave is perhaps my favorite character. He's based on an old Army buddy, Brett 'Rambo' Filzer. If Brett wasn't engaged in combat or kicking down a door he wasn't happy. I only played with Brett for about 8 months in 1985, but he provided enough material for the KODT to last for years. I've lost contact with him over the years but I'm sure he's helping some poor GM lose his hair and gnash his teeth out there somewhere.

Sarah? Sarah was an afterthought. After the KODT ran for several months in SHADIS I was constantly asked "Where's the female gamer?" Some saw it as some deep indication that I, like most gamers, was afraid of women - even to the point of drawing one. I resisted introducing a female member of the KODT for four years. Finally, Sara debuted in issue 2 of the comic book and shortly thereafter in SHADIS. Who is she? Sara is truly a collection of personalities I've played with over the years. A lot of her wisdom and insight come from our female readers who suggest ideas or personal experiences. Sara seems to be the typical frustrated female gamer-type - forever putting up with bouts of hack-'n'-slash and trying to interject some honest, down-to-earth role-playing where she can. Along the way, she attempts to educate her fellow gamers.

Weird Pete has drawn a lot of speculation from readers. For a minor character he seems to have a loyal following. Pete is the struggling game store owner, chock full of advice (some good, some bad) and a little bitter. He's based on a guy I knew in Muncie, Indiana during my college days whose name is long since forgotten. Apparently everyone knows a local incarnation of Weird Pete.

That leaves B.A. Felton. Ol' B.A. has written for SHADIS since issue number 1 although he has a tendency to decline a by-line or any name recogition. For a while he was our convention liaison (anyone who remembers the Bits 'n' Pieces in issues 8, 9 and 10 will know why he was removed from that position.)

B.A. has promised to write up his personal experiences as a GM for us in the near future. In the meantime, you can probably find him at GenCon climbing the 'castle' or flying his remote controlled Zepplin over the crowds in the main hall.

Speaking of GenCon, the entire staff will be at the SHADIS/AEG booth. Come on by and meet some fellow gamers.

Jolly R. Blackburn

July 27, 1995

Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN © 1994

THE FACE-OFF, PART TWO
(BY ROB VAUX & JOHN WICK)

LAST ISSUE, SARA DARED TO CHALLENGE THE AUTHORITY OF GUEST GM WEIRD PETE. NOW, KILLER REF AND DIE-HARD CHARACTER ROLE-PLAYER SQUARE OFF IN A BATTLE TO THE DEATH. WHAT FOLLOWS IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART...

LATER

An Interview with Nigel Findley

Thoughts from the late author of 2XS, GURPS Illuminati and numerous other works

By Andrew J. Lucas © 1995

Nigel Findley, one of the industry's premier writers and designers, passed away recently at the age of 36. He was a well-known author in the gaming field, having written several **Shadowrun** *novels and supplements, as well as a raft of material for other systems.*

Mr. Lucas conducted this interview at Nigel's favorite pub, Stamp's Landing, shortly after his **GURPS Illuminati** *had won Best Roleplaying Supplement of the Year for 1993.*

AL: How long have you been writing?

NF: Apparently I started writing when I was six. My mother saved the first novel I ever wrote, which was about four pages long, typed on a little toy typewriter. I drew the cover art and stapled it all together.

AL: Does she still have it?

NF: I think so. For the next couple of years. I wrote scripts for my favorite TV shows.

AL: Which were?

NF: Typically things like *Batman*, *Get Smart*, and a bunch of series out of England, such as *Captain Scarlet*. I'd always written as a hobby, but I started writing professionally in 1982.

AL: I understand you used to write for mainstream magazines such as **Equity**, which are a far cry from novels such as **The Broken Sphere** for TSR or RPG source books like **Corporate Shadowfiles** for FASA. What made you decide to write for the role-playing market?

NF: I started playing **Dungeons and Dragons** back in '76. I discovered D&D in my first year of university, and it almost led to that being my last year of university. I found it a lot more intriguing than first year science. I'd been playing for six years when I heard that **Dungeon Adventures** was coming out, and I knew they were looking for writers. So I put together an adventure, sold it and it was published in the second issue. I think I wrote three more over the next year.

AL: You started writing soon after you began role-playing?

NF: Yes. I'd written a few things before, for **Western Living, Vancouver Magazine,** and **B.C. Business.**

AL: Were you living in British Columbia, Canada at that time?

NF: Yes I was; I'd written about five articles for reputable magazines, it [writing Adventures] was just something else I thought would be a lot of fun. I found that the game market was easier to keep up with than business magazines, also a lot more entertaining, and they paid better.

AL: They paid better?

NF: **Dungeon** and **Dragon** paid better than Equity. That's changed now, Equity has increased its rates a lot more than Dragon has, over the years. So I still occasionally do articles for business magazines.

AL: What sort of transition did you experience? Did you write at home for a while, or quit the conventional workforce 'Cold-Turkey'?

NF: <Laughs> I wrote in my spare time from '82 till I quit my job in 1989.

AL: So it hasn't been that long.

NF: No. It was Christmas of '89. I'd been looking for a reason to quit. I'd wanted to write full-time since about '86, but I just hadn't had the guts to pull the plug on a good salary.

AL: When you started full-time, who did you start with?

NF: I was already doing a lot of work for TSR. I started writing the larger projects, [like] **Thieves of Lankhmar,** when I was still vice-president of marketing for a computer company. I was still writing in my spare time and was making as much money writing as I was as a vice-president. So I was making a hell of a lot of money at the time, and I figured I didn't like the corporate life anymore. I'd hated it for a few years. Basically what happened was I got into a major disagreement with my boss, the president. I'd always wanted to quit a job and storm out: this was the perfect opportunity to say 'Take this job and shove it.' I gave my two weeks notice over Christmas. You've got to do this once in your life; it's incredibly satisfying.

AL: It's not without good reason that you are jokingly referred to as 'The Prolific Nigel Findley'. How long does it take to write, for example, **GURPS Illuminati** or the novel *2XS*?

NF: <Laughs> *2XS* was my second novel; it took me five weeks.

AL: Five weeks?

NF: Well. <Laughs> I've cut it down from that: I can turn out a novel in three and a half weeks.

AL: That's impressive.

NF: That doesn't include plotting it out. Plotting takes about two months but I do it in parallel with other projects. Basically I come up with an original concept, the major characters and just let it rattle

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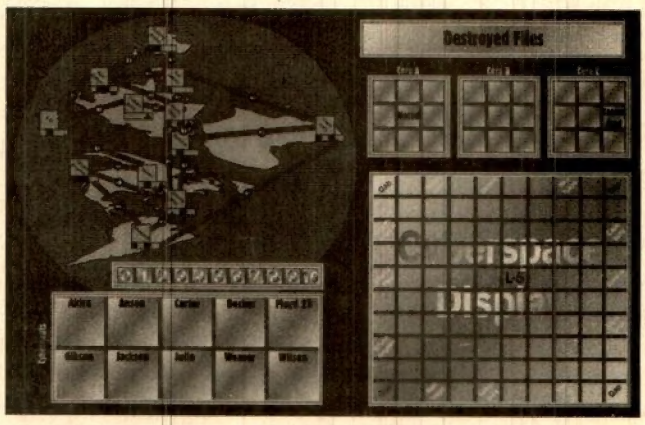

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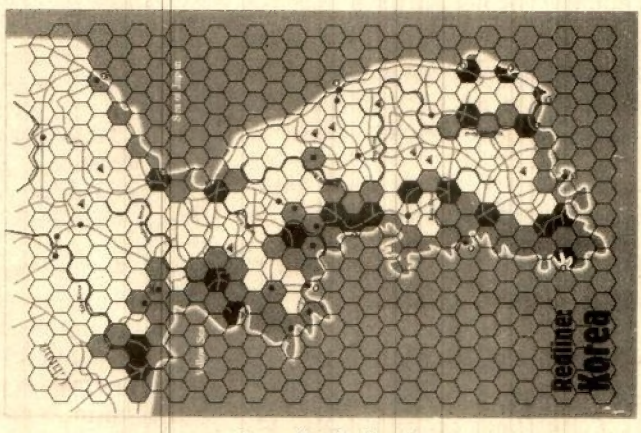

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about in my brain for a couple of months. I carry a tape recorder around with me. I get most good ideas while I'm driving, in the shower or asleep. So I make sure I have a tape recorder ready.

AL: How do you approach your projects? Do you have a specific method which you use to write?

NF: Well...

AL: Other than showering.

NF: <Laughs> For the novels I do, I break them down into chapter by chapter outlines - so I can work on pacing, so that I know what the major plot points are before I start work. It always changes in midstream, in the writing.

What I've always found most satisfying [about] writing a novel is usually about three quarters of the way through: I'll get an idea for a really great plot twist for the ending. So I'll write that up, and then go back to what I've written up to that point, because I write linearly. I'll go back to the earlier chapters to put in the foreshadowing and the plot hooks for this twist.

AL: So you don't have a set ending when you're plotting it out?

NF: I do. I've got a very, very firmly set ending, and then I usually change it. I know exactly where the book's going, but I usually end up being wrong. That's the way it works.

I'll write the plot twist, and when I go back to set it all up, usually I find that the plot hooks and the foreshadowing are already in place. I think my subconscious is doing something really sneaky in the background. It knows what the plot twist is going to be before my conscious mind. Stuff that I drop in as neat little bits of atmosphere becomes foreshadowing. I've never really had to go back and mess around with the beginning.

About the same stage, I'll find out what the book's about. I know what the plot is, I know what the story is, but there's usually one sort of major issue that I deal with, an underlying theme. Something deep: trust and betrayal, that's a big one for me which keeps coming back. Usually it's three-quarters of the way through the book when I realize what the central theme has always been. Again it's like my subconscious is keeping things from me, because it's always been there.

AL: Many gamers would like to write their own novels and gaming books. Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

NF: That's a hard one... Do it. Just write. The only way you can learn to write, is to write. That's all there is to it.

Write for the magazines, they always need material. Find a starter, because I believe Dragon has many issues worth of backlog now. It didn't used to, but it's become so popular now, and so many would-be-writers are pitching stuff... I'd suggest finding something newer, and do your research before you write for them.

AL: Your body of work is quite diverse, would you say that your writing has any common thread or underlying theme?

NF: 'Trust and betrayal.' 'Nothing is ever what it seems.' 'The simple answer is almost always wrong.' That's stuff I always like dropping into a book. Other than that no, it really varies from book to book.

AL: Many writers draw from their life and experience as material for their work. How much of yourself, or your gaming experience, finds its way into your books?

NF: A lot. My books are probably more autobiographical than I'd really care to think about. For the novels particularity, I find that when I figure out what it is the book's about, that usually is also an understanding of whatever 'demons' I'm wrestling with personally. If I'm dealing with trust issues, friendship issues or something like that, I'll find I'm writing a lot more about that.

Personal experiences always find their way into the book. I eavesdrop on a lot of conversations. Sitting in a bar, if I hear someone at the next table talking about something interesting, that will quite often find its way into a book.

AL: And a lot of in-jokes?

NF: Yeah, more and more, actually. If I can slip stuff by the editors, that's great.

AL: I believe your car made a brief appearance in *Shadowplay*.

NF: My car's license plate is actually 2XS, and I used that as the title for my first Shadowrun novel.

AL: Do you still game?

NF: Yes I do. For enjoyment more than anything else. If I'm doing a project that involves lots of rules, I'll drag out my old playtest group, some people I used to game with back in college. But recently I haven't been doing any rules-related stuff at all, mostly fiction and source material.

AL: Like the work you did with **The Universal Brotherhood?**

NF: Yes.

AL: What relationship do you have with gamers, when you meet them at conventions and things like that?

NF: Some of my best friends are gamers. <Laughs> I'm glad to talk to people about gaming in general. If they want to become writers, I'm quite willing to sit down and give them whatever guidance I can.

AL: Have you encountered many gamers who come across as very overbearing? 'Rules Lawyers' as they say.

NF: I've run into a few of them. Well, everybody's run into a few of them. 'Rules Lawyers' tend to leave me alone, because I don't write rules. Some people will come up and challenge me about how, or why I made certain decisions, in source material. All I can say is, that's the way I imagined it and if you don't like it, change it. It's your game.

AL: How have your books, the novels in particular, been received by the general public?

NF: Well the novels, apparently are doing quite well in the 'mundane' world. Everything else, the sourcebooks for example, they only sell to the gamers. No one else, unless they play Shadowrun, is going to go out and buy **The Universal Brotherhood.**

AL: Do you foresee any problems with the new line of novels from *Mayfair*, in particular their emphasis on **Demons?**

NF: I don't think there's going to be a problem. There's nothing in **Seed of Darkness** that's anymore twisted or perverse than things which Peter Straub has written, or Stephen King.

AL: A lot of your work is set in the near future. Do you see any trends develop-

ing today which might influence the future?

NF: Obviously information technology; that's the big one, improved access to information. The people who are trying to block improved access to information, and the people who are trying to fight the people who are blocking it. We're developing a sort of Cyberpunk ethos out there at the moment.

A case in point is encryption for data communications. The National Security Agency in the States is trying to limit certain types of encryption, because there are certain encryption packages out there that are good enough that the NSA can't break them.

AL: Similar to what the banking industry uses.

NF: Yeah. That's about the level they want to use. The NSA likes to be able to break every encryption that's being used for business, for obvious reasons. Now there are a lot of people out there who don't like that. So they are trying to propagate new standards for data encryption that are theoretically impossible for the NSA to break. The NSA is trying to make it illegal to disseminate systems like this.

There's a group which calls themselves the 'cipherpunks', who are doing whatever they can to illegally distribute this stuff.

AL: Information wants to be free.

NF: 'Information wants to be free.' Yeah. So I see that as a big trend. The near future worlds I write about aren't particularly likely. I don't see us ending up in a Cyberpunk type environment.

AL: But certain elements you can see developing now?

NF: Oh certainly, but it's going to end up twisted in someway. We're not going to end up in your typical dystropic 'Gibsonesque' Cyberpunk world. It might be dark, it might be bleak, but it's going to be very different.

AL: I understand you were involved in an adaptation of *The Difference Engine*.

NF: Well yeah, I was supposed to be [involved]. *Steve Jackson Games* wanted to do a GURPS version of the book. As it turned out my schedule was too tight, and I couldn't fit it in. I probably wouldn't have wanted to do the project at that time, because I was offered a bunch of other projects, novels and such, that quite honestly paid better than Steve Jackson Games.

The Difference Engine would have been fun, but writing a GURPS sourcebook is about the same amount of effort as writing a novel, and a novel is worth around seven or eight times as much as a GURPS sourcebook.

AL: I understand TSR has come out with a similar genre for its **Amazing Engine** system called **Fairie, Queen, and Country.**

NF: I haven't had an opportunity to examine the Amazing Engine yet, but apparently the generic system is starting to catch on again. There's the Amazing Engine, *Wizards of the Coast* is working on something called **Envoy,** and it's very much the same kind of idea, a generic multi-genre system.

AL: I understand you are incorporated under the name Barre Sinister. What does your company do?

NF: Initially Barre Sinister Productions was just me. I incorporated for tax reasons, pure and simple. Now it is starting to branch out a little bit, I'm getting more authors involved in the projects, all under the Barre Sinister umbrella. Kind of subcontracting [the] work out.

AL: As an editorial service?

NF: I provide an editorial service. I've also got a reasonable track record with the industry, so I can get contracts for Barre Sinister that the individual authors couldn't get by themselves. So the expertise I provide to the people who are under the Barre Sinister umbrella is editorial services, creative services, business services and I'll work with them on the project.

AL: Where do you see your career going in the next five to ten years?

NF: Up! <Laughs> More novels. I love writing novels. That's what I've always enjoyed doing. Creating new background, new characters, telling stories about them. That's basically why I got into role-playing in the first place. I paid my dues writing scenarios and modules, [but] fiction is a lot more satisfying.

I think I'll probably continue writing sourcebooks for the game systems which continue to intrigue me. I love Shadowrun, I love the background. **Earthdawn** looks kind of interesting, [and] *Mayfair* **Demons.**

AL: Have you done anything for Demons or Earthdawn?

NF: For Demons, other than the novel, I haven't done anything yet, but we're talking about some projects. Earthdawn I'm doing smaller projects, something for the legends book, and the trolls section for the Races of Earthdawn.

AL: I understand you've also been doing some of the creatures for the **Creature Compendium?**

NF: I've been doing that on the side, and I think I might end up doing the **Wastes** sourcebook for Earthdawn as well. I will probably be onto that after GenCon.

AL: And where do you see the RPG industry going in the next few years?

NF: Well. I think the most interesting events I've seen recently are the licensing of **Talislanta** and **Vampire: the Masquerade** by GURPS. What that hints, to me, is that the industry is swinging more to a focus on interesting backgrounds, to interesting worlds to play in. The way I used to see the industry was [like this]: A company would develop a system, and then slap together a world which you could use that system in, but they would sell you a system. Now it seems people are more interested in getting an interesting world, regardless of the system.

I know people who run Vampire under the Shadowrun system. I don't know how well it works, but that's what they do. They buy an interesting background, and they'll fit the system they like in with it anyway.

AL: In Hollywood it's said that 'It's not what you know, it's who you know'. Is the role-playing industry similar?

NF: Not much. There's a lot more work given out on merit. It helps to know people, but it's not necessary. When I broke into the industry I knew nobody. I hadn't met anybody, I hadn't spoken to anybody on the phone, I just sent in query letters to the editors of the various magazines.

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Wizards

The first time I actually met someone from these companies was when I happened to be in Milwaukee on business in '87 and I stopped in at TSR. TSR was forty miles out of town, so I jumped in my rented car and went and pounded on Roger Moore's door, and that was it. You can get in on merit and that's one of the things I like about the industry.

AL: Recently the RPG industry as a whole has been affected by a number of issues, most notably a spate of lawsuits, the outlawing of lead figures in New York, and the banning in Denver of two books published by *White Wolf*. What are your views on this?

NF: The censorship issue bothers me. I've got this immediate knee-jerk reaction to censorship, I hate it on principle. The game shops in Denver that banned the White Wolf products exhibit misguided, wrongheaded thinking as far as I'm concerned. [Concerning **Clanbook: Brujah**] People I know use the F-word a lot, it doesn't seem to bother them. They're not twisted, perverted people, it's life. People use profanity in life.

Games like Vampire are aimed at an older age group than, say, D&D. As an adult I don't like my choices, my freedom to read a book that contains profanity, to be limited on the off chance that some child might pick it up and be traumatized, (especially) when anyone who watches Superchannel or something is going to be inundated with a lot worse than what you'll find in a White Wolf product. The reason I brought up cable TV is because more kids watch cable TV than get into [R-rated] movies. All a six year old needs is a remote control, and they can watch soft-core porn. Personally I think it should be a non-issue.

AL: White Wolf is coming out with a live role-playing version of Vampire called **Vampire: Theater Macabre.** [published as **The Masquerade**] In the past there has been a lot of publicity concerning D&D players who would live role-play and the psychosis involved in those cases.

NF: Jaffey, *Mazes and Monsters* and things like that. I don't know, I think that there's a chance there may be another reaction to that. I find myself bothered by the live role-playing. I think it's a great idea, it's a lot of fun. I've done it, but what happens is a lot of people do it in an environment where there are people who aren't going to understand, and people who are going to (intentionally) misunderstand.

AL: Much like the assassination games that were common on college campuses a while ago?

NF: Exactly! So it's a case of responsibility, people who play **Killer,** or whatever, irresponsibly are going to bring a backlash against the ones who [play] it responsibly.

AL: I find it interesting the something like Vampire or Killer will receive more publicity than say, gun control laws in the States.

NF: Well, it's an easy issue, it's a very good 'Us verses Them' thing. The strongest popular backlash has been against things which have a very small group of aficionados, who are easily distinguishable. They're the guys who are running around in the weird clothing, "It's Them." We know that we're okay and "It's Them." It's [a] simplistic mind set.

AL: Essentially the squeaky wheel that doesn't have a large powerful lobby group behind them, gets greased.

NF: <Laughs> Precisely. You mentioned the lead ban. The thing about the lead ban is that, arguably no one has been killed by lead figures. So even if we accept that all [three people] were killed by lead figures, maybe. How many get killed by handguns? Which is going to get banned?

AL: Or asbestos? Or transmission towers?

NF: Yeah. It's the gun issue, that I find so fascinating. Ban the figures, don't ban the guns! [Lead figures have a] smaller lobby group.

AL: Who or what would you say is the biggest influence on your work?

NF: I guess Robert Heinlein, he's the formative influence behind my fiction, and to a minor degree, a couple of dozen others. Game writing? When I started I'd never read a published adventure. I'd played D&D since '76, but I'd never read a published adventure or module, so I started doing it my way. I'm still doing it my way, I haven't followed anyone else's style.

AL: What projects are you currently working on?

NF: **Underground Notebook** for Mayfair, for their new **Underground** dark, superhero role-playing game.

AL: Sort of a *Wild Cards* type game?

NF: Kind of, Wild Cards with a really cynical edge. Cyberpunk with superheroes and a very healthy dose of parody. It's actually a very good game, and should be a lot of fun.

AL: It's hard to imagine a game darker or more cynical than the Wild Cards books.

NF: It's played more or less for laughs. More like [the movie] *Brazil* with superheroes, I guess. So I'm working on that, the second novel in the trilogy for *Virtual World Entertainments*, which is called *The Restless Day*. It's the 'real' story behind the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, and the title comes from a poem she wrote. What else? I'm doing preliminary research for the **Denver** boxed set for FASA. I'm thinking about **Trolls** for Earthdawn, the second Demons novel, and I've got about six other projects in one stage or another of preliminary plotting. Oh, and a novel called *Bridge of Time* for *Virtual World Entertainment*, which is a company based out of Chicago [and] started by Jordan Wiseman, that is doing a series of books in conjunction with Disney.

AL: That sounds like a pretty large project.

NF: Yeah, it is. Virtual World Entertainments is opening up Virtual Reality theme parks, sort of like the *Battletech Center* in Chicago - except more so! It's pretty flashy stuff. When I was in Chicago two years ago I stopped by the Battletech Center.

AL: I've heard it's a pretty intense experience.

NF: After about five minutes in the simulator, you'll need to wring your shirt out. It's really intensive stuff.

AL: Do you find it hard to work with that much on your plate?

NF: Ahh... that's just the way I work. I've never worked with less so I don't know what it's like. I've always overloaded myself. People come to me with projects, and if it's something I find interesting, I'll try and work it into my schedule somehow.

I don't have a very good relationship with the word no. So I'm usually overworked.

AL: If you had your choice of projects, what would you like to do next?

NF: I've always been interested in screenplays, but recently I've been going through a lot of hassles with various editors and such. I know that the level of 'hassle' when you're working on a screenplay is so much greater. You're not just dealing with one editor, it's the whole studio. It just seems like a pain at the moment.

I think given total freedom I'd probably do something with a story I have in mind. I guess you'd call it a techno-thriller, along the lines of Tom Clancy's *Patriot Games* and *The Hunt for Red October*. It's something I've wanted to write for a long time, but I'd have to do it on spec. What happens now is, people approach me with a contract before I start. Writing something outside the gaming field, I'd have to write the entire novel, and then have to sell the damn thing.

AL: Have you been approached by anyone outside the field?

NF: Uh...actually, yeah...Harlequin has approached me. They want me to write a romance. <Laughs> I should send them Seed of Darkness.

AL: Recently there's been an abundance of characters in various books with the initials N.F.

NF: <Laughs> The Nick Flinders syndrome. It seems that every time I do a Barre Sinister project with someone else, with Fraser Cain for **GURPS Supporting Cast**, or Geoff McMartin for **Dark Alliance**, the Vancouver sourcebook for Vampire, there seems to be a character who finds his way in, Nick Flinders or Nicholi Flunder or something like that. I figured if I can't beat them I might as well join them, so I dropped Nick Flinders or the equivalent thereof into most of my products recently. <Laughs>

AL: The Shadowrun second edition contains a picture of three Toxic Shamans, one of which bears a striking resemblance to you, although with yellow eyes.

NF: Nigel the Toxic Shaman. I think it was Jeff Laubenstein who dropped that in. It started off with the cover of *2XS*, the illustration of Dirk Montgomery getting zapped by the insect spirit, is very close to me with a radical haircut. So that was done on purpose. They kept [my picture] out of *Shadowplay*.

AL: Is there a lot of this type of in-joking?

NF: Yeah, an awful lot, it's rife with them. If you know the personalities involved, or party with them at the Safehouse in Milwaukee during GenCon, you'll start to understand a lot more of those really strange references that turn up in your favorite books.

AL: What is the atmosphere at GenCon like?

NF: Biggest party I've gone to in a very long time. It's a lot of fun. Basically it's a good idea to go, if you're interested in getting into the industry. ❑

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SHADIS
The Independent Games Magazine

On the Edge: A Comprehensive List

A Collector's Checklist for Atlas Games' Conspiratorial CCG.

Basic Set

Card #	Name	Rarity
❑ 1	The Dirt on D'Aubainne	R1
❑ 2	Gladsteins' Secret	R1
❑ 3	Glorious Lords' Secret	R1
❑ 4	Glugs' Secret	R1
❑ 5	Hermetics' Secret	R1
❑ 6	Kergillian's Secret	R1
❑ 7	Pharoahs' Secret	R1
❑ 8	Tridents' Secret	R1
❑ 9	Tulpas' Secret	R1
❑ 10	The Dirt on Dr. Nusbaum	R2
❑ 11	Jagannath Adhi	R1
❑ 12	Al Amarjan Friends	C2
❑ 13	Dalal Allar	R1
❑ 14	Sunshine Allarha	R1
❑ 15	Mattias Allemande	R1
❑ 16	Ghadir Allemi	U1
❑ 17	Fahd Amaq	R2
❑ 18	Amok	U1
❑ 19	Anti-Matter Grenade	U2
❑ 20	Aries Ambush	U2
❑ 21	Armada	U1
❑ 22	Dev Ashana	R1
❑ 23	Astral Doorway	U2
❑ 24	Astral Flux	C1
❑ 25	Astral Interference	R1
❑ 26	Astral Mimicry	R1
❑ 27	Astral Negatrons	R2
❑ 28	Astral Wisdom	C3
❑ 29	Atavism: Ninja	R1
❑ 30	Aura of Evil	R1
❑ 31	Bad Luck	C1
❑ 32	Battle Bike	R1
❑ 33	Beginner's Luck	U1
❑ 34	Julio Beitleiro	U1
❑ 35	Bellow	U2
❑ 36	Bestial Rampage	R1
❑ 37	Betelgeusan	R1
❑ 38	Bitter & Herb	C2
❑ 39	Blackmail	C1
❑ 40	Avan Bloodlord	R1
❑ 41	Bloodlust	U2
❑ 42	Body Double	R1
❑ 43	Aurora Bolt	C2
❑ 44	Mikhail Borisov	U1
❑ 45	Break-Bones	C2
❑ 46	Breakage	C1
❑ 47	Lino Briazzi	U1
❑ 48	Bull-Beater	U2
❑ 49	Bystander Effect	U1
❑ 50	Gemma Candiru	U1
❑ 51	James R. Cartwright	C2
❑ 52	Ricardo Cerdo	C1
❑ 53	Roger Chalk	U2
❑ 54	Charisma	R1
❑ 55	Chikutorpl	C2
❑ 56	Mihaly Cieznick	U2
❑ 57	Cloak Ambush	U1
❑ 58	Cloak Hit	U2
❑ 59	Sir Arthur Compton	R2
❑ 60	Concealable Weaponry	C2
❑ 61	Contacts in the Art Scene	C3
❑ 62	Copper Dagger	R1
❑ 63	Coral Entity	R2
❑ 64	Counter-Intelligence	U1
❑ 65	Crystal Trap	C1
❑ 66	Cut-Ups Machine	R1
❑ 67	Cyanide Capsule	C1
❑ 68	Cheryl D'Aubainne	R1
❑ 69	Constance D'Aubainne	R1
❑ 70	Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	R1
❑ 71	Monique D'Aubainne	R1
❑ 72	Joana d'Fabelle	C1
❑ 73	Dark Aura Ring	C1
❑ 74	Deadly Inspiration	R1
❑ 75	Deportation Investigation	U1
❑ 76	Silver Detti	C1
❑ 77	Disinformation	U1
❑ 78	Disintegrator Ray	R1
❑ 79	DNA Difficulties	C1
❑ 80	Cyril Doros	R2
❑ 81	Dumb Luck	C1
❑ 82	Duro-Trench	C1
❑ 83	ELF Wave Generator	R1
❑ 84	Empty	C1
❑ 85	Akorra Encombi	U1
❑ 86	Adelina Escobar	U2
❑ 87	Manuela Eselbrust	R1
❑ 88	Abanobi Famani	U2
❑ 89	Harry Fang	R1
❑ 90	Lou Farazzi	C1
❑ 91	Ben Feather-on-Wind	U2
❑ 92	Mugly Flats	U1
❑ 93	Friends in Arms Barrio	C3
❑ 94	Friends/Broken Wings Barrio	C3
❑ 95	Friends in Flowers Barrio	C3
❑ 96	Friends in Four Points Barrio	C3
❑ 97	Friends in Golden Barrio	C3
❑ 98	Friends in Great Men Barrio	C3
❑ 99	Friends in Sunken Barrio	C3
❑ 100	Frogbreath	C1
❑ 101	Fury	U2
❑ 102	Gang A-Gley	U1
❑ 103	Genetic Prejudice	R1
❑ 104	Frank Germaine	C2
❑ 105	Good Luck	C1
❑ 106	Gremlins	R2
❑ 107	Deborah Grierson	R1
❑ 108	Erik Gudne	R1
❑ 109	Anwar Hallajin	R1
❑ 110	Umar Halleen	R1
❑ 111	Twilight Hammer	C1
❑ 112	Barber Hammock	C1
❑ 113	Leif Hardarson	C1
❑ 114	Hank Henderson	R2
❑ 115	Saxolf Hermann	U1
❑ 116	Hidden Gear	U1
❑ 117	Kunigunde Himmelsbach	C1
❑ 118	Hostage	U1
❑ 119	Hostility Channeler	C1
❑ 120	Hostility Detector	C1
❑ 121	Human Ch'i Gun	R2
❑ 122	Hypno-Disc	C1
❑ 123	Isa Ifaq	C1
❑ 124	Immunity	U1
❑ 125	Inspiration	U1
❑ 126	Intelligence Contacts	U2
❑ 127	International Influence	R1
❑ 128	Mamduh Jalla	R1
❑ 129	Karmic Assassin	R1
❑ 130	Johnny Kazoo	U1
❑ 131	Kergillian Implant	R1
❑ 132	Kidnap	U1
❑ 133	Hans Knudson	C2
❑ 134	Joey Ko	U2
❑ 135	Rigor Kwasek	U1
❑ 136	Latent Hero	R2
❑ 137	Latent Psychic Attack	R1
❑ 138	Latent Strength	R2
❑ 139	George Lazarus	R1
❑ 140	Lee G'won Foo	U1
❑ 141	Ley Line Nexus	R1
❑ 142	Loot	C1
❑ 143	Lope	U1
❑ 144	Loyalty Conditioning	U1
❑ 145	Abel Ludo	U1
❑ 146	Giovanni Mancini	C2
❑ 147	Mantra	C1
❑ 148	Arwa Marabu	C1
❑ 149	Ricardo Martinez	R1
❑ 150	Fabrissa Melors	U2

❑ 151	Military Contacts	U2
❑ 152	Mind Control Messages	R1
❑ 153	Mole	U2
❑ 154	Molly, Queen Mum/Baboons	R2
❑ 155	Money Talks	R1
❑ 156	Dr. Paulo Montserrat	U1
❑ 157	Akio Morimoto	C1
❑ 158	Multi-Dimension	U1
❑ 159	Abdullah Mustafa	R1
❑ 160	Mutant Ambush	U2
❑ 161	Mutant Sympathies	U2
❑ 162	Mutation	U2
❑ 163	Kamorro N'Duban	R1
❑ 164	Nachtmeister	R1
❑ 165	Nano-Tech Med. Machines	R1
❑ 166	Negative Energy	C1
❑ 167	Neuro-Star	R1
❑ 168	New Blood	R1
❑ 169	Number Three	R1
❑ 170	Dr. Furchtegott Nusbaum	U2
❑ 171	Marla Oceana	U2
❑ 172	Oppenheimer Contacts	C3
❑ 173	Martin Oumage	U1
❑ 174	Patrol Baboon	C2
❑ 175	Arthur Pendrick	C1
❑ 176	Pistol-Grip Chainsaw	C1
❑ 177	Polymer Clothing	C2
❑ 178	Portable Sub-Sonics	R1
❑ 179	Portia	R1
❑ 180	Possession	U1
❑ 181	Psi Gun	R1
❑ 182	Psychic Flux	C1
❑ 183	Psychic Sensitivity	C3
❑ 184	Psychic Singularity	R1
❑ 185	Psychic Virus	U1
❑ 186	Psychovore	C1
❑ 187	Jack Rack	U1
❑ 188	Radio Laser Satellite	R2
❑ 189	Dinesh Rajpal	C2
❑ 190	Jonny Rama	U1
❑ 191	Rampage	R2
❑ 192	Ransom	C1
❑ 193	Ravage	R1
❑ 194	Asha Rayhar	R2
❑ 195	Red Orca	R1
❑ 196	Reek Rend	C1
❑ 197	Angela Reyes	U1
❑ 198	Robert Richardson	U1
❑ 199	Riots	R2
❑ 200	Cherri Robinson	C1
❑ 201	J.S. Rocket	C1
❑ 202	Fernando Rodriguez	U1
❑ 203	Randy Rogers	U2
❑ 204	Aleksandr Rominosky	U1
❑ 205	Mars Royale	R1
❑ 206	Don Rozo	C1
❑ 207	Pietro Ruffo	C1
❑ 208	Thor Runestone	U1
❑ 209	Sabotage	U1
❑ 210	SACQ	R1
❑ 211	Juana Salvador	U1
❑ 212	Seamless Shirt	C1
❑ 213	Seklut Poison	U1
❑ 214	Self-Actualizer	U2
❑ 215	Veronica Sellers	R1
❑ 216	Sensitivity	C1
❑ 217	Havani Shagasemi	R2
❑ 218	Prem K. Sharma	R1
❑ 219	Shreds	R1
❑ 220	Simon Xin	R1
❑ 221	Giuseppe Sizo	U1
❑ 222	Slag	C1
❑ 223	Burford J. Slystick	U1
❑ 224	Smear Campaign	U2
❑ 225	Eliza Smith	R2
❑ 226	Sneak	C2
❑ 227	Peer Solgerkvist	C2
❑ 228	Karla Sommers	R2
❑ 229	Linda Sourinen	U1
❑ 230	Status Quo	R1
❑ 231	Raw Steamer	C1
❑ 232	Wheeler Stein	U1
❑ 233	Stinger Mark V	U1
❑ 234	Stun Gas	U2
❑ 235	Stun Ray	R1
❑ 236	Stun Ring	U1
❑ 237	Sub-Sonics	U1
❑ 238	Takeshi Sumanoto	R1
❑ 239	Super-Vitamin Diet	U1
❑ 240	Malak Suzier	C2
❑ 241	Switch-Flipping	R1
❑ 242	The Terminal	R1
❑ 243	Terrors	U1
❑ 244	Throckmorton Device	R1
❑ 245	Clyde Throckmorton	R1
❑ 246	Total Taxi	U2
❑ 247	Trade Contacts in the Edge	U2
❑ 248	Trident Morale	U2
❑ 249	Trugga	R1
❑ 250	Tulpa	U2
❑ 251	Stefano Turolli	R2
❑ 252	Ali Twine	C1
❑ 253	UN Forces	R1
❑ 254	Unanticipated Influence	U1
❑ 255	Underground Trident HQ	R1
❑ 256	Sally Undokku	C1
❑ 257	Unexpected Difficulties	C1
❑ 258	Vibe Valiant	C2
❑ 259	Dmitri Vatsavos	C2
❑ 260	Andrea Vernon	C1
❑ 261	Guglielmo Vigneto	U2
❑ 262	Ward Against Enemies	U1
❑ 263	Weegzon	C1
❑ 264	Weird Radiation	C1
❑ 265	Wheel of Fortune	U1
❑ 266	Holly Winter	U1
❑ 267	Wiretap	U1
❑ 268	Zipper	C2
❑ 269	Mary Zule	R2
❑ 270	Resounding Bell	R1

Card #270 was added in the Standard Edition.

The Cut-Ups Project

❑ C1	The Deal W/Sub-Randomness	U1
❑ C2	Secret of the Cut-Ups	U1
❑ C3	The Truth About Chaos	U1
❑ C4	The Truth/Control Addiction	U1
❑ C5	Matti Aaltonen	C4
❑ C6	Andalusia Dog	U1
❑ C7	Blatant Scam	U1
❑ C8	Claus Brinker	C4
❑ C9	Jacob Brinker	U3
❑ C10	Jeroen Brinker	U1
❑ C11	Pere Brinker	U1
❑ C12	Brownshirt	C6
❑ C13	Censorship Flap	U3
❑ C14	The Centipede	C4
❑ C15	Chaos Chancer	C4
❑ C16	Charm Bracelet	U1
❑ C17	Cheap Baboon Trick	U3
❑ C18	Yuzhou Chen	U1
❑ C19	Dzamilla Chielminski	C4
❑ C20	Closet Surrealists	C4
❑ C21	Coatless Code	U3
❑ C22	Copyright Violation	U1
❑ C23	Robert "Doc" Cross	C4
❑ C24	Cut-Ups Method	U1
❑ C25	Death Car	U3
❑ C26	Deep Pockets	U3
❑ C27	Deific Aura	U1
❑ C28	The Dimension of Gnerust	C4
❑ C29	Eyeballs Drillbit	U3
❑ C30	Duped and Narcotized Masses	C4
❑ C31	Antenella Falchi	C4
❑ C32	Fall of the Wall	U3
❑ C33	Fractal Infection	C4
❑ C34	Funkasite	U1
❑ C35	Giblets Granberry	U3
❑ C36	Eunice Rae Hopner	U3
❑ C37	Horrors Count	U1
❑ C38	Ideological Polarization	U1
❑ C39	Michiko Ishii	U1
❑ C40	John Isidor	C4
❑ C41	Audrey Itsulaaq	C4
❑ C42	Emmanuelle Karmitz	U3
❑ C43	William Kear	U3
❑ C44	Koanhead	U1
❑ C45	Life Imitates Art	U1
❑ C46	Evan MacDonald	C4
❑ C47	Message to Space	U1
❑ C48	Mircea ?	U3
❑ C49	Oliver de Moleron	U1
❑ C50	Apocalypse Moorhouse	U3
❑ C51	Akio Morimoto	U3
❑ C52	Mrs. Brinker	U3
❑ C53	Abbas Nadjafi	C4
❑ C54	Newtonian Slam	C4
❑ C55	Kofi Ogunlala	U1

❑ C56	Oil Pan Annie	C4
❑ C57	Mary Olekobaai	U3
❑ C58	Emer O'Tillery	C4
❑ C59	Paralytic Bananna	U1
❑ C60	Personnel Copier	U3
❑ C61	Pocket Panic Button	U3
❑ C62	Protoplankton	C4
❑ C63	Pythagorean Convulsion	U3
❑ C64	Quantum Squeezer	U2
❑ C65	Excel Quitlong	U3
❑ C66	C. A. Radford	U1
❑ C67	C. A. Radford	U1
❑ C68	C. A. Radford	C4
❑ C69	C. A. Radford	U3
❑ C70	C. A. Radford	C4
❑ C71	Rain of Walrus	U3
❑ C72	Really Quite Angry Kid	C4
❑ C73	Recursive Time Loop	U1
❑ C74	Rex	U1
❑ C75	Rising Fanaticism	C4
❑ C76	Claude-Lucien Rouvier	C4
❑ C77	Sacrifical Bloodbath	U1
❑ C78	Stairway to Nowhere	C4
❑ C79	Stasis Accumulator	U3
❑ C80	Serhiy Stech	U3
❑ C81	Sub-Random Subversion	C4
❑ C82	Malak Suzier	U3
❑ C83	Anatoly Taghel	U3
❑ C84	Tiffany Trilobite	U1
❑ C85	Unattainable Desire	C4
❑ C86	Undeserved Power	U3
❑ C87	Unified Conspiracy Theory	C4
❑ C88	Olimpia Urgeghe	U3
❑ C89	Anoop Varma	U3
❑ C90	Isil Ziya	C3

Shadows

❑ D1	About the Low-Lifes	U1
❑ D2	Crime & Punishment	U1
❑ D3	Mr. LeThuy's Secret	U1
❑ D4	The Net's Secret	U1
❑ D5	Monty Albion	U2
❑ D6	All-Fours	U1
❑ D7	Ghadir Allemi	U2
❑ D8	Lyubov Anatova	U1
❑ D9	Alicia Andromeda	C
❑ D10	Annie the Rib	C
❑ D11	Astral Tempest	C
❑ D12	Atavism: Priestess of Mu	U1
❑ D13	Tommy Bakka	U2
❑ D14	Andrew Banks	U1
❑ D15	Rixa Bekker	U2
❑ D16	Bolstered Heart	U1
❑ D17	Dr. Renee Boneau	U1
❑ D18	Bums' Rush	C
❑ D19	Ace J. Cirrus	C
❑ D20	Contacts in the CPC	C
❑ D21	Jorge Corriendo	U2
❑ D22	Crackdown	U1
❑ D23	Monique D'Aubainne	U1
❑ D24	De-Individuator	U2
❑ D25	Dead, Dead, Dead	C
❑ D26	T. Joe Dreck	U2
❑ D27	Eel	U2
❑ D28	El Zod 7	C
❑ D29	Facelessness	C
❑ D30	May Ferendi	U1
❑ D31	Roz Fernsch	U2
❑ D32	Otto Finkelstein	U2
❑ D33	Fishwipe	C
❑ D34	Flux	U1
❑ D35	Formless	U2
❑ D36	Betty Frenum	U1
❑ D37	Friends in Justice Barrio	C
❑ D38	Friends Under the Street	C
❑ D39	Miriam Galaxy	C
❑ D40	Pepper Grange	C
❑ D41	Julie Grouse	U1
❑ D42	Thunder Gruen	U2
❑ D43	Jill Grunder	U1
❑ D44	Gum It Up	C
❑ D45	Roman Gundle	U1
❑ D46	Hack-Master	C
❑ D47	Eddie Haggle	U2
❑ D48	Barber Hammock	U2
❑ D49	Hand Out to the Lost	C
❑ D50	Heating Up	U2
❑ D51	Jerry Heckle	U1
❑ D52	Consuela Herrera	U2
❑ D53	Honor Among Thieves	C
❑ D54	Howdah	U2
❑ D55	Anya Huesco	U1
❑ D56	Azza Jami	U2
❑ D57	Knobs	C
❑ D58	Kwik Klinik	U1
❑ D59	LeThuy Injection	C
❑ D60	Mr.Tramh LeThuy	U1
❑ D61	Giovanni Mancini	U1
❑ D62	Freddie Manger	U2
❑ D63	Gregory Mantle	U2
❑ D64	Kalev Maran	U2
❑ D65	Rita Milagro	U1
❑ D66	Vincent Moire	C
❑ D67	Moonsilk	U2
❑ D68	Ajay Obalago	U1
❑ D69	Rodney Odge	C
❑ D70	Seiji Ogata	U2
❑ D71	Lissy Omgek	U1
❑ D72	Orders from Tomorrow	C
❑ D73	Giurgiu Otinka	U2
❑ D74	Otz	U2
❑ D75	Elizabeth Pock	U1
❑ D76	Lujayn Qufra	U1
❑ D77	Hank Ramas	C
❑ D78	Wanda Rod	U1
❑ D79	Alonzo Rubio	U2
❑ D80	Norton Rumple	C
❑ D81	Benjamin Sells	C
❑ D82	Shake 'em Out	C
❑ D83	Gayth Silver	C
❑ D84	Slaughter	U2
❑ D85	Sludge	C
❑ D86	Smack Back Attack	C
❑ D87	Spike	C
❑ D88	Squeaks	U1
❑ D89	Aniela Stansky	U1
❑ D90	Startle	C
❑ D91	Starwalk	C
❑ D92	Robert Stop	C
❑ D93	Cooper Syme	C
❑ D94	Rod "Scabs" Tar	C
❑ D95	Fea Terronez	U1
❑ D96	"The Radiator"	U1
❑ D97	The Skids	C
❑ D98	The Squeeze	C
❑ D99	Clyde Throckmorton	U1
❑ D100	Dolores Titania	U1
❑ D101	Touchy Explosives	C
❑ D102	Underworld Contacts	C
❑ D103	Vibro Blaster	C
❑ D104	Vortex	U1
❑ D105	Tanja Voss	U1
❑ D106	Simon Wallop	C
❑ D107	Walter Was	U2
❑ D108	Great White	C
❑ D109	Rhonda Widdershins	C
❑ D110	Wrench	C
❑ D111	Xotok	U1
❑ D112	Sandy Yama	C
❑ D113	Margarita Yelmo	U1
❑ D114	Omni Yushka	C
❑ D115	Oma Zero	U2
❑ D116	Laura Zoom	U1
❑ D117	M'ay Zung	U1

Arcana

(Arcana list courtesy of and © 1995 Trident, Inc. Thanks, guys!)

❑ A1	Atlanteans' Secret	U1
❑ A2	The Cabal's Story	U1
❑ A3	The Magic Circle's Secret	U1
❑ A4	Purpose of the Neutralizers	U1
❑ A5	The Secret of the Saou	U1
❑ A6	Tablets of Kish	U1
❑ A7	Theory Behind Astral Powers	U1
❑ A8	Theory Behind Psychic Powers	U1
❑ A9	Truth About Necromancy	U1
❑ A10	Vera Afanasyevna	U1
❑ A10	Vera Afanasyevna	U1
❑ A11	Alter-Edge	U1
❑ A12	Melinda Amduat	U1
❑ A12	Melinda Amduat	U1
❑ A13	Ruth Anati	U2
❑ A14	Peach Angelic	C2
❑ A15	Anubis Scrolls	U1
❑ A16	Astral Egg	U2
❑ A17	Astral Refractor	C2
❑ A18	Atavism: Necromancer	U1
❑ A19	Atavism: Priestess of Thoth	U1
❑ A20	Bad Vibes	U1

- ❑ A21 Bruce Barret C2
- ❑ A22 Bast U1
- ❑ A23 Belakaorkov C2
- ❑ A24 Stas Bendick C1
- ❑ A25 Tomek Bereszowsky C1
- ❑ A26 Big Mitts U2
- ❑ A27 Blind Spot C2
- ❑ A28 Book of Malahel U2
- ❑ A29 Book of Putrescences U2
- ❑ A30 Broadcast U1
- ❑ A31 Bubbles U1
- ❑ A32 Canopic Jar U2
- ❑ A33 Carcinogenia U2
- ❑ A34 Cat's Feet C2
- ❑ A35 Charismatic Resevoir C2
- ❑ A36 Chateau Melmoth C1
- ❑ A37 CPC Crackdown U1
- ❑ A38 CPC Headquarters U2
- ❑ A39 Anastasia Crowley U1
- ❑ A40 Anastasia Crowley U1
- ❑ A41 Monique D'Aubaine U1
- ❑ A42 Dark Secrets of Art Compton C2
- ❑ A43 Delicatessen U2
- ❑ A44 Devourer U2
- ❑ A45 Tanja Djilas U2
- ❑ A46 Doubting Thomas C1
- ❑ A47 Ross Dowden C2
- ❑ A48 Mesut Economou C2
- ❑ A49 Sani Enahoro C2
- ❑ A50 Execration U2
- ❑ A51 Exorcism U2
- ❑ A52 Lou Farazi C2
- ❑ A53 Adrian Fig U1
- ❑ A54 Ingred Fjernsen U1
- ❑ A55 Nicolas Flamel U1
- ❑ A56 Flooding Nile U2
- ❑ A57 Forked Tongue U2
- ❑ A58 Friends in the Science Barrio C2
- ❑ A59 Gherwalbus C2
- ❑ A60 Rose Ghitoni C2
- ❑ A61 Gnaoul U1
- ❑ A62 Suvadra Goldstone C2
- ❑ A63 Notify Grout C1
- ❑ A64 Saeb Hanoun C2
- ❑ A65 The Harayelicon U2
- ❑ A66 Harem Conspiracy U2
- ❑ A67 Marmattan U1
- ❑ A68 Nawal Al-Haz C1
- ❑ A69 Head on the Door C1
- ❑ A70 Healing Statue U1
- ❑ A71 Triple Henderson C2
- ❑ A72 Bulk Hertzog U2
- ❑ A73 Athena Iakatos U2
- ❑ A74 Iron Skin C2
- ❑ A75 Kamikaze U1
- ❑ A79 Andrej Kawierna U2
- ❑ A77 Donna Khalifah C2
- ❑ A78 Kiyoteru Wakai C2
- ❑ A79 Eugene Krebbs C2
- ❑ A80 Kunimatsu Kozo C1
- ❑ A81 Billy Kwei U2
- ❑ A82 Fava Kahkdar C2
- ❑ A83 Lightning Stike C2
- ❑ A84 Love Philtre C2
- ❑ A85 Ma'at U1
- ❑ A86 Magic Mural C2
- ❑ A87 Michelle Malafi C2
- ❑ A88 Mammon U2
- ❑ A89 Djibril Maougal C2
- ❑ A90 Marlowe Reading Room U2
- ❑ A91 Ricardo Martinez U1
- ❑ A92 Sister Mary Evangeline C1
- ❑ A93 Media Skepticism U1
- ❑ A94 Cheb Mehenni C1
- ❑ A95 Misdirection C2
- ❑ A96 Marilyn Munyaradzi C1
- ❑ A96 Marilyn Munyaradzi C1
- ❑ A97 Myriad C2
- ❑ A98 Damayanti Narasimhaiah C1
- ❑ A99 Anima Nee-Owoo C2
- ❑ A100 Farah Nekhbet U1
- ❑ A101 Nekromuzzle C1
- ❑ A102 Nicolai Nemeth C1
- ❑ A103 Nickels C2
- ❑ A104 Dumiso Nkomo U1
- ❑ A104 Dumiso Nkomo U1
- ❑ A105 Bjorn Nkwera C1
- ❑ A106 Leila Noureddin U2
- ❑ A107 Yvonne Pacheco C2
- ❑ A108 Umberto Palladino U1
- ❑ A109 Umberto Palladino U1
- ❑ A110 Umberto Palladino U1
- ❑ A111 Dr. Jamartanathy Panil C2
- ❑ A112 Paranormal Unity Theory U1
- ❑ A113 Islam Petri U2
- ❑ A114 Eileen Pitchford C2
- ❑ A115 Nicolae Plesu C1
- ❑ A116 Poltergeist C2
- ❑ A117 Gilbert Portwine C1
- ❑ A118 Psi Cat C1
- ❑ A118 Psi Cat C1
- ❑ A119 Psychic Anomaly U1
- ❑ A120 Psychic Time Bomb C2
- ❑ A121 Blush Quay C2
- ❑ A122 Horus Redwell U2
- ❑ A123 Ring of Gyges U2
- ❑ A124 Fob Saline C2
- ❑ A125 Scarab C2
- ❑ A126 Secret Temple of Thoth U1
- ❑ A127 Sephira U1
- ❑ A128 Seven Oils C1
- ❑ A129 Shadrach U1
- ❑ A129 Shadrach U1
- ❑ A130 Nahhi Shahal C2
- ❑ A131 Josephina Shourkry C1
- ❑ A132 Slipper U2
- ❑ A133 Pressure Sly C1
- ❑ A133 Pressure Sly C1
- ❑ A134 Jersey Smith U1
- ❑ A135 Isabel Soyinka C1
- ❑ A136 Spackle C1
- ❑ A137 Spaulding Manuscript U2
- ❑ A138 Madeline Svora C1
- ❑ A138 Madeline Svora C1
- ❑ A139 Judy Swelter U1
- ❑ A140 Kate Taylor C2
- ❑ A141 Telekinetic Punch C2
- ❑ A142 Throttle U1
- ❑ A143 Topaz Tidore U1
- ❑ A143 Topaz Tidore U1
- ❑ A144 Steno Topic C1
- ❑ A145 Raul Trevino C2
- ❑ A146 Ur-Master U2
- ❑ A147 Alisher Usman U1
- ❑ A147 Alisher Usman U1
- ❑ A148 Dr. Marla Valdez U2
- ❑ A149 Ellen Wu U1
- ❑ A149 Ellen Wu U1
- ❑ A150 Ginger Yang C2
- ❑ A151 Yashga C2
- ❑ A152 Isis Zaman U2
- ❑ A153 Qubilah Zeroual U2

Arcana *has four chase cards, randomly inserted into boosters at the rate of approximately two per booster box.*

- ❑ CHASE 1 Janis
- ❑ CHASE 2 Signe Lathiere
- ❑ CHASE 3 Grim Linden
- ❑ CHASE 4 Chris Robinson

Key to identifying variants in ARCANA:
A10, A12, A96, A104, A129, A133, A138, A143, A147, A149: Different background colors on each variant.
A118: Different artwork and different artists on each variant.

Special Promo Cards

- ❑ S1 Astral Wisdom S
- ❑ S2 Saleem Helicopter S
- ❑ S3 Dmitri Vatsavos S
- ❑ S4 Red Orca S
- ❑ S5 Kergillian Implant S
- ❑ S6 Kamorro N'Duban S
- ❑ S7 Scythian Ring S
- ❑ S8 Lope S
- ❑ S9 Nachtmeister S
- ❑ S10 Linda Sourinen S
- ❑ S11 Throckmorton Domination S
- ❑ S12 Bavarian Illuminati S
- ❑ S13 Closet Surrealists S
- ❑ S14 Deep Pockets S
- ❑ S15 Desperate Ritual S
- ❑ S16 Message to Space S
- ❑ S17 Mary Olekobaai S
- ❑ S18 Personnel Copier S
- ❑ S19 Quantum Flux S
- ❑ S20 C. A. Radford S
- ❑ S21 Rain of Walrus S
- ❑ S22 Isil Ziya S
- ❑ S23 Helene Clark S

A Walk On the Edge

SHADIS Magazine Presents A Cornucopia of Paranoia, Rust-Eating People, Talking Dogs, Game Variants and Handy Deckbuilding Tips

Through the Gate of Dead Birds

A Teaser for Next Year's Super-Secret On the Edge Project

By Robin D. Laws © 1995 Trident, Inc.

I already regret stepping through the Gate of Dead Birds. I admit that I was the best choice for the assignment. My famous determination helped me to resist the temptations here. So far. This version of Al Amarja is the one I have always yearned for. Here the victories we only dream of in our home dimension have already been won. The two Al Amarjas — my home, and this strange and unfamiliar one — are like mirror images of one another. But the mirrors are like the ones you find in a funhouse. Everything here is twisted from what we know. Twisted from the chaos and instability of our reality to a gray, authoritarian stability. I won't lie to you. This charcoal and gunmetal world is so attractive to me that I don't want to go back through the Gate. I want to stay here, in a world where you can wake up in the morning without having your bedroom rearranged on you. Here the history books say the same thing at six o'clock as they do at nine o'clock. Only a very small handful of the animals talk. Spontaneous human combustion is not the number one cause of death for men in my age bracket. And the azraphogoi do not make the night streets their hunting ground; as far as I can tell no one here has even heard of them.

In short, this is a world that has not gone completely insane on the molecular level. Chaos is more than contained in this Al Amarja; it has been pushed back to a tiny corner of the spectrum. Its manifestations here are benign, even friendly. You might consider it heresy, but I sense a kinship with the Chaos Boys of this reality. Like us, they are a small cell of idealists fighting a guerrilla war against the dominant paradigm. Like us, they desire freedom for humankind. Like us, they fight ruthless and implacable enemies, outmanned and outgunned. I can't begin to tell you how utterly disorienting it is to exist in this upside down version of reality.

For example: I have befriended Horrors Count himself! Here he is a most forgiving fellow — I tried to kill him on sight, naturally enough. He and Claus Brinker disarmed me and dragged me down through the sewers to their humble waterfront hideout. This was my first surprise: Obviously I expected to be taken to the Whispering Towers for trial and execution. When I voiced my surprise, they seemed genuinely confused: They'd never even heard of the place! I expected them to start torturing me, but they merely left me taped to a chair while they asked questions. It took me a while to realize that their queries were sincere. They knew nothing of our Al Amarja, and were as shocked by the everyday facts of our world as I am by theirs. I decided that they were essentially honest, but it still took me a long period of independent confirmation before I fully accepted all they told me that day.

I have often heard you say, Monique, that Control has no inherent morality. I'll admit that until I came here I was really only pretending to understand what you were talking about. Chaos was simply the adversary: It turned my beloved Michiko into a parasitic insect pupae. It transformed my city into a freak show of deadly terrors. I don't have to tell you how hellish it has made our lives. So when you talked about the importance of balance, and how if things had unfolded just a little bit differently Control might be the dark, monolithic force we were all fighting against, I wrote that off as — well, just words to pass the time.

Now I find myself in an alternate Al Amarja, one that seems as if it was created merely to illustrate your point. Here, The Edge is not a last, pathetic oasis of comparative sanity in a world gone mad. It is a bastion of weirdness in a world inching towards passivity, conformity, and uniformity. Agents of Control long ago won the battle for this world — now the only true battle is intramural, as Control's minions fight one another for dominance. If only we had a fraction of the resources and structure of any of these groups! I'll tell you what I can about them, based on the information Horrors (yes, we are on a first name basis) supplied to me. He warns us to take it all with a grain of salt: even the best intelligence may be riddled with disinformation.

First and foremost are the secretive Pharaohs, the group that Horrors reserves special hatred for. These are immortal beings whose existence precedes humanity's. They are deeply rooted in the political systems of the world, operating through a legion of human dupes known as the Quislings. They are slow to react, and understand the modern world only dimly. But they have the deepest pockets, and are themselves opponents who outmatch the average human in virtually every way. Have you ever run across an analogue of the Pharaohs in our reality, Monique? If they even exist now — and it is entirely possible that the Throckmorton Effect retroactively erased them from reality — they might be powerful, if untrustworthy, allies. They hate change and uncertainty like we hate drowning or being set on fire. If we could find them, they might join our fight. We'd have to watch our backs if we ever won, but winning the struggle seems such a distant possibility to me now that I think we should be willing to try anything.

Horrors also speaks of a hydra-headed conspiracy known as the Movers. Its war-

ring branches — called Vornites, Hermetics, and Gladsteins — have one thing in common: a desire to dominate and control mankind. One branch uses mind control, another paranormal powers, the last cutting-edge science.

I was briefly able to infiltrate this last branch of the Movers through a bizarre coincidence. I was indulging in a fit of nostalgia on the patio of Sad Mary's Bar and Girl, remembering the days before the Chaos Plague, the many raucous nights Michiko and I spent there. I suppose in a way it was worth the wrenching trip through the Gate of Dead Birds just to spend a night in an unscathed, still-active Sad Mary's.

I was soon approached by an individual who I later learned was called Oil Pan Annie. Approached is too inert a word: She stepped right up to my table and tugged mercilessly on my eyebrows! She expressed surprise that they weren't fake. I was baffled, but quickly realized that it was this Al Amarja's version of Akio Morimoto she knew. Instinctively I felt that I'd be in serious danger if I revealed my status as a visitor from a parallel dimension, so I played along. This Annie character was exuberant and not too perceptive, and I was able to coax much information from her without tipping my hand.

It became clear that this Al Amarja's Akio was until recently part of a conspiracy that also included Annie. From Horrors' briefing, I decided that they were Gladsteins. Slowly it became apparent that Annie's Akio had gone AWOL and joined another conspiracy, one whose members marked themselves by shaving off their eyebrows. Hence the painful yanking incident; she'd assumed I was wearing false ones to cover up a shaved brow.

I've saved the most salient fact for last: the conspiracy that this Akio had defected to was...the Throckmortons! Yes, a Throckmorton effect runs rampant in this reality, too! Armed with the information Annie had inadvertently given me, I went off in search of my counterpart, to somehow learn from him the Throckmortons' role in this world. From what I gathered, the Throcks were only now beginning to get a foothold here, with only a few isolated incidents of Throckmortonism breaking out. My alter ego was among the first to fall. I entertained notions of warning Horrors of the wave of Chaos that was soon to envelop his world in the name of Throckmorton.

I know you have decades of experience in covert operations, Monique, but have you ever tried to track yourself down? Take it from me: You get very odd stares when you ask informants if they've seen you in the area recently. I resorted to telling people I was looking for my long-lost twin brother: "Like me, only without eyebrows." This seemed to work, and I was told to haunt the peep shows of Flowers Barrio to find my "brother."

If tracking yourself down is a disorienting experience, beating yourself into unconsciousness is a true step beyond. I found myself lurking in the shadows outside a less-than-charming establishment called Little Bo's Peeps, cursing exiting patrons as perverts who "made the Buddha cry." Familiar as I am with my own bad habits as a hand-to-hand fighter, I made easy work of myself. When accosted, the other me led, predictably, with his right. A swift uppercut to the jaw was all it took: I crumpled into my arms, and dragged myself off to the Cut-Ups' bunker. (Did I forget to mention that this is the name that the benign Chaos Boys of this world have given themselves?)

My interrogation of myself, as might be expected, defied expectations. This supposed Throckmorton victim displayed none of the symptoms we have come to associate with the condition. No speaking in tongues, no spontaneous mutations, no linguistic viruses. Instead of the barking madness and bizarre lateral thinking I'm used to dealing with, this Throcked Akio was simply bitter, narrow-minded and peevish. He was obsessed with "perversion" and "decadence", words that he slapped on anyone having more fun than himself. He spat at me, and called me an agent of Disorder. I laughed at that bit of irony, a long and wrenching laugh that tore itself painfully from my chest. The first laugh I have had in years. My prisoner was only too eager to share his cramped, petty ideology with me. He wanted to see the world ruled by a benevolent dictator, with every citizen sorted and categorized and kept within tight boundaries. His idea of "benevolent" chilled my soul. He sought a tyranny of Order as stifling as the tyranny of Disorder we face every day.

When I asked him who this dictator might be, he seemed confused, as if a name sat on the tip of his tongue, tantalizing him but refusing to unveil itself. When I gave him the word "Throckmorton" it seemed to stir something within him. But it was clear to me that this Al Amarja's Throcks were no more a conscious, directed organization than ours. He knew nothing of the device, of the omnipresent Clyde himself, or of Angela Reyes, the High Priestess of Disorder.

I asked Akio why he thought he was being given the third degree by his exact double. Without pausing to consider, he replied that he was obviously in the grips of a hallucination, doubtless one foisted on him by the liberal media establishment. He seemed devoted to this delusion, so I let him go, confident that he would refuse to assimilate any useful information from our encounter. Horrors concurred; although disturbed by the Throck phenomenon, he felt that harming victims of the effect was like executing sufferers of any infectious disease. It was not this Akio's fault that he was a Throck, any more than it was my dear Michiko's fault that she expressed herself into that terrible thing I must now keep locked in the tank under my bed.

I spoke some more with Horrors about the Device. I now believed that it was the key to the differences between our two worlds. In both realities, its effects had seeped backwards through time to warp individual psyches. In our world, it warps them towards a malign and destructive strain of Chaos. In his world, it turns them into pawns of a constricting and hateful version of Control. The symptoms might be polar opposites, but the disease vector was the same. But why the split?

Then Horrors told me of the Cut-Ups Machine, their own reality-warping mechanism. In fact, he let me inspect it. It looks rather like a combination paper shredder and meat grinder. According to Horrors, it is a fail-safe against the domination of Control: When things get too bad, they can pull the lever and reorder reality, thwarting their enemies.

We drank together through the night. It was the first vodka I had tasted since the Chaos Plague turned all alcohol to

absinthe. We both got sailingly drunk. He confided in me, shared his theory that the Cut-Ups Machine could create a recursive time loop if pulled in response to the growing power of the Throckmorton device. But I was way ahead of him. I had already decided that our world must be living in that time loop, living in a reality played backwards and inside out. Horrors' salvation is now our hell.

Perhaps his hell also. If the friendly, open Horrors of that world were to look upon his vicious, mindless counterpart in ours, he would shiver with despair. If my theory is true, our world is Irony to the Nth degree, awful reversal clad in flesh and bone and brick.

As to the game of counterparts and alter egos, Monique...I suppose you want to know who you are in this other world.

Believe me, you don't want to know. ❑

Business As Unusual

by Greg Stolze © 1995

"This subtle stuff batters my ass. When they're at your throat, at least you know where they are."

—Hans Knudsen

On The Edge simulates a full-blown war between conspiracies, with both sides lashing out with their cats paws' and both sides losing pawns right and left. However, no conspiracy can maintain a permanent state of war, any more than a nation can. These variant rules represent a more usual state. Instead of direct conflict, the conspiracies pursue their own goals — all the while trying to conceal them from their rivals.

How to Play

Before beginning a normal game of On The Edge, each player is randomly assigned a Goal. It is fine for more than one player to get the same Goal. Each player keeps his or her Goal secret. The Goals are written down, only to be revealed at the end of the game.

The game ends as usual, when one player amasses an appropriate number of points, or when the conditions of a special Environmental are fulfilled. Only at this time are the Goals revealed. If the game ends because of points, the Goals modify the totals of one or more players; thus, one player might get 24 points and *end* the game, only to find that because his opponent fulfilled her Goal better, she gains extra points that put her ahead, winning her the game.

If the game is ended by a special environmental (such as spelling out a word to fulfill the "Cut–Ups Method"), then all players are considered to have influence of zero. From this sum of zero, the penalties and benefits of the special Goals are assessed.

The Goals

1. Insulate

The car was silent except for a gentle whir as a pane of glass rose to separate them from the chauffeur. Then it was just the hum of the road until a woman spoke.

"I'm getting sick of funerals, Mihaly."

The heavyset gambler shrugged uncomfortably. "Hardarson was nobody. Expendable. A zilch..."

"The third zilch this month." Mihaly was silent.

"This is a bad pattern to get into, and I want it broken. Today. No more casualties, do you understand?"

"But... to protect *all* our agents? That's... it's..."

"Possible, right Mihaly? You'd better hope it is; or the next funeral may be yours."

An Insulated conspiracy is one that protects its members — usually providing a false sense of security to aid in recruiting more suckers. Nonetheless, conspiracies with this Goal protect their own.

At the end of the game, every player deducts one point from his or her score for every character who has been popped with no save. (Tulpas don't count.)

2. Instigate

The two elderly Japanese men sat drinking tea for several hours. Not one word was exchanged, but the marginally younger man had a report for his eager underling when he emerged.

"What is the Master's will?"

"When the tiger and the python battle, it is the hare who wins."

A conspiracy which is Instigating wants to stir things up — you never know what (or who) might float to the surface.

The Instigating player should secretly keep track of the number of combats that occur during play. For each combat that does not result in the death of an Instigating character, the Instigator gains a point. For every Instigating character who is popped, however, the Instigator loses a point.

3. Broaden

"That's not really considered polite, you know."

The woman in the exquisite silk suit blinked and stopped rooting around in her nose.

"But it feels nice."

"The humans don't like to watch it. Don't ask me why, but we're going to have to put up with their foibles and inconsistencies a bit longer."

"Oh?"

"Apparently Red Orca thinks that too many humans are becoming suspicious. We have to... what's the expression? 'Muddy the waters.'"

"Isn't that the name of a singer?"

"I can't figure it out either. Anyhow, we're supposed to recruit as many pawns as possible to confuse any observers."

"Why didn't they just say that?"

"We're supposed to pass for human, remember? We must learn their silly sayings."

"I know. 'Right on,' exalted commander."

"Groovy, my loyal minion."

A conspiracy whose Goal is to Broaden itself simply wants more members — no

matter how useless, pathetic or undesirable.

At the end of the game, subtract the number of characters your opponent controls from the number you control and add this number to your score. In a multi-player game, subtract the players from your opponent who controls the greatest number.

4. Deepen

Andrea Vernon took a deep breath and carefully composed her features into a wide grin. Only then did she politely knock and, upon hearing the countersignal, enter.

"Greetings, Andrea! How lovely it is to see you again!"

She'd used to think the boss was crazy, before she'd watched him take apart an unfortunate burger for "inadequate morale." Now she knew he was both crazy and effective.

"It's just great to be here, boss! Just great, great, great!"

"I'm ever so glad to hear that, Andrea! I have a safe, fun mission for you!"

Andrea still had bloodstains on her best silk blouse from his last 'safe, fun mission' but she kept the grin pasted on as she enthusiastically squeaked out "Oh boy!"

"Our friends in the field are sure having a good time, but maybe it's time to get a little more order. Won't that be nice?"

"What sort of order?"

"WON'T THAT BE NICE?!?"

"Ever so nice, boss!"

"Super duper! I'll expect a division of troops into ranks and grades, with each having one and only one superior to report to. Field reports will be filed bi-weekly on a system based on Chinese astrology — see, look at this swell placemat!"

"It certainly is... swell!"

"Only when our own house is in order will we be able to get on with our imperative, safe, special, lovely, fun mission of eradicating all the dirty, sad, no-good stinkers. We'll get rid of them all, won't we Andrea?"

"Every last one, boss!"

"Whoopee! By the way, there's a suitcase full of money and things for you by the door."

Deepening is a term for imposing a more rigid hierarchy on a conspiracy. By developing solid lines of communication and discipline, groups of disparate individuals (and they don't get much more disparate than Al Amarjans) (no, that's not "desperate," though that applies as well) can be fused into one effective unit.

A deep conspiracy is one with full files from front to back. For each full file you have, add one point to your score. Each opponent deducts one point for every incomplete file they have.

5. Diffuse

"Taxi!"

One step ahead of an Aries gangster with blood on his shoes and froth at the corners of his mouth, Gemma Candiru dove into a cab, only to find her comrade Mantra coolly sitting inside.

"Someone had a notion you might appreciate a taxi, Gemma."

"Thank someone for me...what the hell happened?"

"They put the squeeze on Vince, he rolled over on you...you were supposed to eventually lead them to me."

"I see."

"I'm not sure you do. We won't be able to associate any more... we'll be in touch."

"Wait a damn minute! Am I being cut out of the loop?"

"Temporarily, I'm afraid. Don't worry, we won't hang you out to dry... I promise."

Diffusion is a tactic used by conspiracies to separate the leadership from the disposable rabble. By creating a gap, it becomes more difficult for traitors to be effective, and harder for leaders to be located.

For every empty rank between a back row character and a front row character, you get one point. For every empty file next to a file with an empty center row, you are allowed to count the empty rank again. (The right and left edges of your conspiracy do not count as "empty" rows; they're simply not there.)

Key: ■ Character Card
□ Empty Space

■
□

■ yields one point. A setup like this:

■ □ ■
□ □ □
■ □ ■

yields four points — one for each file, and two more because each has an empty file next to it. Finally,

■ □ ■ □ ■
□ □ □ □ □
■ □ ■ □ ■

yields seven points — three for the three files, two more because the outside files each have one empty file next to them, and two *more* because the center file has two empty files next to it.

6. Disappear

"Listen, dammit, I need more men in the field!"

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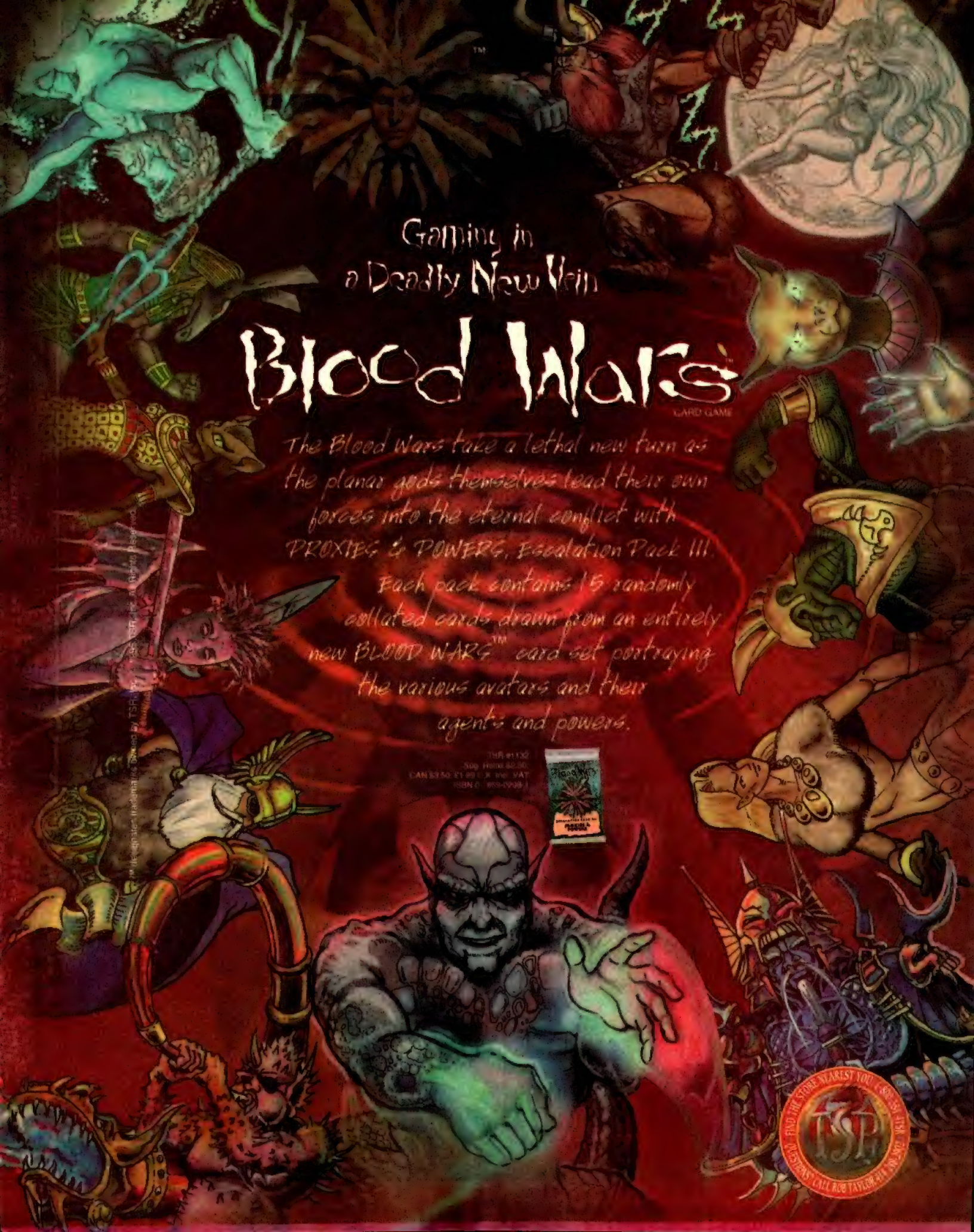
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"Mr. Bloodlord, I'm not sure I like your tone of voice."

The gang leader gulped, but his eyes remained as hard as globes of bloodshot steel.

"I just don't understand why we have to hide like this."

"I've explained all this, Mr. Bloodlord. There are no imperative actions at this juncture. Leaving our operatives in the open simply invites attack. Instead, we will conserve our strength to deal a devastating blow — when the time is right. Am I clear?"

"Yeah, yeah, I guess so..."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Bloodlord?" The man's voice was icy.

"I mean, yes... master."

The Goal of Disappearing is to maintain the smallest effective presence. By doing so, a conspiracy can observe others while remaining undetected. To fulfill this Goal you must have at least one character with pull in play when the game ends. If you don't, your conspiracy has insufficient leadership to observe the others.

When the game ends, subtract the number of characters you have in play from the number your opponent has in play. Add the number to your score. In multiplayer games, you only achieve your goal if you have the fewest characters of any player in the game. In such a situation, subtract your number of characters from the number of the opponent with the most characters.

Final Note

Don't forget, this is "On The Edge." Disinformation is your friend! It is not only permissible to deceive other conspirators about your Goals, it is extremely wise. ❑

Time Engine Time

by Greg Stolze © 1995

"Nusbaum? Who's Nusbaum?"

"He *was* Her Exaltedness' personal physician before he got unborn."

"Oh god, not again..."

"Afraid so.... I only remember him because I'm a folded copy of the prime Dinesh Rajpal. I didn't properly exist at the moment when he was erased, so I got the prime's memories from before. I've got about fifteen minutes before I get absorbed back into Dinesh prime, and the memory of Nusbaum will probably get lost."

"Any chance of going back and preventing them from unborning him?"

"Slim... they could have killed his grandparents, hit him with a car when he was forty, or simply interrupted his parents on the day he was conceived. Too bad, he was useful."

"Well, we'll make them pay. We've found out Guglielmo Vigneto's date of birth, so I'm going to go back and switch him at the hospital. That should prevent him from performing the assassination on Dev Ashana last week."

"Who's Dev...? Oh forget it."

Charles Fort observed that the steam engine was developed almost simultaneously at several different places across the globe — but at nearly the same time. His explanation was that it was "steam engine time." The idea of the steam engine, which was inconceivable a few short years ago, had suddenly became obvious.

On Al Amarja, the inconceivable happens every day, and the citizens are constantly exploring the frontiers of fringe science, chaos theory and sub-random technology. It was only a matter of time before a conspiracy developed time travel.

What no one foresaw was that most conspiracies would develop it simultaneously.

The Time Machine In Play

The time machine is considered Gear, and is vulnerable to any card that affects Gear. It has the traits "Fringe" and "Sub-Random."

The machine can be represented by a counter, and it costs five influence points to call. Its cost can never be reduced, and the machine can never be played for free (such as with the characters Eyeballs Drillbit and The Really Quite Angry Kid). Any player can call the time machine any time they can gather the necessary pull. If it is destroyed, it can be called again with another investment of the eight influence points. It is also possible to have multiple time machines in play.

With the exception of the defense bonus, the character carrying the time machine must crank to use its powers. It can be transferred, stolen, looted and lost just like every other piece of equipment in the game.

The Powers of the Time Machine

It's a versatile and powerful device, with a number of different functions. With one exception, they all cost pull. This is because the effects cannot be achieved by the machine alone; without the proper information, the machine is more of a hazard than a help.

Defense: 0 cost.

"...so he goes 'Gimme the gadget and you only get hurt a little,' and I go 'Yeah?' and he's all 'Yeah!' so I'm like 'Let's see how tough you are without your heart for ten minutes!' WHOOM! That was pretty much the end of the conversation."

Anyone carrying the time machine gets +1 power, because the machine allows them to shear off parts of an opponent and send them briefly into the future. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on what side of the machine you're on), it's not very easy to aim.

Fold: cost of Fold is equal to double the DP or Pull of the character being Folded, whichever is higher.

"Yeah, you know that old story the nurses used to tell about seeing Nusbaum covered in blood and gore one minute, and the next minute he's spotless? I've seen that done lots of times now, with all kinds of people. See? There's always a rational explanation."

"Folding" is the term that has developed for travelling briefly to the future (or past) and bringing back an ally. In essence, the Folded person can be in two places at once — at the cost of being (or of having *had* been) nowhere for a while.

In game terms, Folding a character means you can uncrank it, to represent it being in multiple places at once, or doing more than one thing at one time. The only limit to how many times a character can be Folded is how many times the controlling player can get enough pull.

Unbirthing: cost of Unbirthing is double the number of cards you search in your opponent's deck. You must discard one card from the top of your deck in order to Unbirth someone.

"Monique who?"

Unbirthing is the process of travelling back in time to prevent the appearance of an enemy. It's an arduous process, requiring research, power and skill, but when done, nothing removes a threat as completely. Unfortunately, there are always some side effects to such temporal distortions, but they're concealed by causality, so the conspirator ordering the unbirthing never realizes what's missing.

To perform an unbirthing, ditch a card from the top of your deck and pay X number of pull. You may then pick up cards from your opponent's deck equal to half the number of X. Pick out one character (and it has to be a character) and completely remove it from play. Then return the rest of the cards to your opponent's deck and reshuffle it.

Winning the Game

The game is won normally, by amassing the right number of influence or by fulfilling any environmental that changes victory conditions; the time machine is just a means to an end.

The conspiracy that wins can be considered to have gained a decisive advantage in the transtemporal chaos that multiple time travellers can cause. They might even be able to undo the effects of the game so that none of the other conspiracies even developed the device. ❑

Elementary Deckbuilding in On the Edge

by John Nephew © 1995 Trident, Inc.

So you've picked up a copy of **On the Edge**, and you want to start playing the game. You need to build a deck to play with. Doing it right is essential to a successful first game. If you don't have a workable mix of cards, you'll miss the fun the game can be. This article will give you some pointers on making your first decks, based on my experience in making dozens of decks for myself and for demonstrating the game at stores and conventions.

For simplicity, let's suppose we are going to make a minimum-size deck: 40 cards. You can then use the numbers I suggest as ratios for larger decks, *e.g.*, 8 pullers is 20% of the deck, so in a 100-card deck you might put in 20 of them.

Percentages are a good way to think, because at the start of the game you will draw 10 cards. If you want to make sure you have 2 Resources in your opening hand, about 20% of the cards in your deck should be Resources. If you like to use expensive cards (Pharaohs, D'Aubainnes, etc.), you may want to use 30% or even more Resources.

The first thing to do is to sort your cards by type: Characters, Resources, Whammies, Gear, and so forth.

There are two essential types of cards in On the Edge: Characters and Resources. In fact, you could make a competitive deck with nothing else in it. For me, selecting Characters and Resources is the core of the deckbuilding.

Characters

I like about half of my deck to be characters. I sub-divide characters into four categories: Pullers, Hitters, Blockers and Specialists.

Pullers are absolutely essential. These are characters with a number in the "Pull" statistic, meaning they have Pull that can be converted to Influence at the end of the turn. Scoring Influence is how you win the game. Giovanni Mancini, Vibe Valiant and Chikutorpl are all common pullers. I'll usually put 8 pullers in a deck of 40 cards. I like some high-DP pullers, but I still want plenty of them to be cheap (cost 1).

Hitters, in my book, are characters with an AP no less than 3, DP less than or equal to their AP, and no Pull. J.S. Rocket, with AP 6 and DP 2, is a great example of a hitter. Guglielmo Vigneto and Fabrissa Melors, both uncommon cards, are eternal favorites. I want 4 good hitters in my 40-card deck, so I will have someone in my opening hand for taking out my opponents' threatening characters.

Blockers are the reverse — their DP is no less than 3 and equal to or greater than AP. (When the scores are equal, I just toss the character into one stack or the other; the categories are flexible.) Glugs make great blockers because of their Immunity to Control (is anything as annoying as an opponent using one of your pullers' guardians to pop him?). Weegzon is one of my favorite common blockers — great DP, and his special ability is just gravy. Four blockers will give your Pull-generating characters some protective cover. You might consider having even more, reducing the number of specialists or "other" cards in the deck.

Specialists are a catch-all category for those diverse characters that have funky special abilities or just don't fit neatly into the aforementioned categories. The frail Kunigunde Himmelsbach may find her way into your deck as a specialist because you need her Psychic trait, or because you'll use her to lure attacks and then spring a Fortune Whammy (Good Luck or Beginner's Luck) from your hand — a Whammy which has double effect on her. Ravage is an extremely powerful specialist; he has minuscule AP and DP, but his special ability (crank to pop any cranked character) makes him one of the most valuable and feared characters in the game.

Remember that characters may fit into more than one category. I usually think of Barber Hammock as a blocker, because his special ability can bump his DP up to 8; but in a multi-player game I may count him as a specialist (perhaps included to give me the Psychic trait in play so I can

The HOTTEST...

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call •-cost Psychic Gear). Mantra's ability to lower a Character's DP could make him a specialist, but his DP of 4 makes him into a decent blocker as well. Whenever possible, look for good combinations of cards (multiple Glugs that increase each others' power, for instance), and pick characters that can serve more than one purpose in your deck.

Resources

Resources, in my opinion, should be selected after Characters. If you're going just from one starter deck, you might not have a lot choice in picking Resources, but if you've got a pool of cards to choose from you'll want your choice of characters laid out in front of you. As you'll notice, each Resource has a specialty, a bonus for certain types of cards. If you've chosen a lot of Aries characters, you'll want plenty of Friends in Flowers Barrio, since that provides +1 Pull to call Aries cards. Favorite Resources are Astral Wisdom, Psychic Sensitivity, Oppenheimer Contacts, and Friends in Broken Wings Barrio — linked to Astral, Psychic, Fringe and Human cards. These are the four most general traits in the game, so they'll give you a lot of bang for your buck if you line them up with the other cards in your deck.

Beware of over-specialization, however. A card from **The Cut-Ups Project,** called Ideological Polarization, can be played on a Resource to make it Unique, popping all other copies of that Resource in play and preventing any more from being called. Having only Oppenheimer Contacts as Resources in your deck may help you call Dr. Nusbaum quickly — but one Ideological Polarization might completely ruin your chances of winning the game! **Arcana,** the expansion set coming in August, will introduce another good reason or two to diversify your Resources.

I like about 8 Resources in a deck, assuming some of them are linked through bonus pull to other cards in the deck. You might be able to get by with less (e.g., a lot of Aries cards have bonus Pull to call each other, meaning you can bring in a lot of them with fewer Resources — leaving space in your deck for an extra Bloodlust, Aries Ambush or even a Battle Bike), or you might need more. Some Characters and conspiracies are notoriously costly — D'Aubainnes (some characters cost 9!) and Kergillians (which don't have the link to a common Resource like humans have to Friends in Broken Wings), for example.

Sometimes I don't treat Resources as Resources. Intelligence Contacts, Contacts in the CPC and Tiffany Trilobite are three cards that are Resources, but I am more likely to use them for their special ability than to call other cards. Thus I consider them in the "Other Cards" category. The Throckmorton Device, on the other hand, has a Cost of 4 rather than the 0 typical of Resources, and its Pull can be used to score Influence. Therefore I sort it into the puller Character pile.

Other Cards

There are a lot of other cards in On the Edge, and in selecting 12 of them to round out your deck you can have a lot of fun. Here are some points to keep in mind.

Whammies: A few Whammies are essential. Cards like Good Luck and Sneak will give you the drop on an opponent, and Gang-A-Gley will stop her from doing the same to you.

Gear: Gear can turn a narrow specialist into a moonlighting hitter or blocker. You can't go wrong with a Pistol-Grip Chainsaw in your deck, for giving Twilight Hammer a suicide mission to break into the D'Aubainne Asylum and pop Akorra Encombi.

Conditions: Somewhat less fragile than gear, but Conditions cannot generally be moved from one Character to another. If you've got Fringe cards in your deck, you'll want to find a Weird Radiation; with Astral cards in your deck, look for Negative Energy and Astral Doorway. Be very careful about •-cost Conditions, though...

Bullet Costs: If there is a bullet (•) after the cost of a card, that means you need to have a Character or Resource with a trait in common with that card in order to bring it into play. The Anti-Matter Grenade is a fantastic card — but unless you have a Pharaoh, Quisling or the rare UN Forces Resource in your deck, you'll never have a chance to use it. The easy solution is just avoid bullet-cost cards...but you'll miss out on a lot of fun and useful cards. My rule of thumb is, if I include a •-cost card, I want at least 4 Characters and/or Resources with corresponding traits (preferably Resources, since they aren't as fragile).

Environmentals and Secrets: I don't recommend putting these in your first deck, since they tend to be very specialized (hence their high rarity). After a couple of games, when you can see how your deck fits together and can see how these cards will interact with what you're already doing, try mixing them in if they seem like they would complement your other cards.

If in doubt, fill some of your "other cards" slots with more Characters and Resources. You can't go wrong by having another Blocker to protect your important characters!

Conclusion

Think of this article as a primer, just to get you started playing the game with a functional deck. If you're interested in learning some finer points of deckbuilding, as well as tactics in play, be sure to pick up a copy of *Surviving on the Edge*, the On the Edge players' guide.

Deck construction is one of the things that makes trading card games like On the Edge so fun. No two decks are alike, and each player can make decks that suit her own ideas and favorite strategies. As you learn the game, experiment with different mixes, different card combinations. Some specialized decks will look very different than the breakdown I suggest (for instance, a Low-Life deck built from the Shadows expansion; or many decks centered on game-changing Environmentals). On the Edge, with its colorful and varied characters, is especially well-suited to making "personality" decks. Think of it as a form of personal expression, and have fun! ❑

The On the Edge Omni-League

Why A Confirmed CCG-Hater Plays On the Edge

By Spike Y. Jones © 1995. Omni-League Rules by Jonathan Tweet, © 1995 Trident, Inc.

Last month, I bought a house. My day job doesn't pay a lot over minimum wage. I make some money on the side from freelance writing and editing, but most of that is frittered away on trips to GenCon or to visit my parents in Canada. And one of these days I can envisage my family growing.

Why am I telling you all this? Because, like many gamers out there, I have too many other expenses to justify getting really involved in Collectible Card Games. And while some of you may have allowed yourselves to be lured into the "just one more little booster" sickness of CCGs, I've held firm to my commitment not to spend a penny on them, and to avoid playing them whenever possible in order to minimize my chance of infection.

And every weekend for the last few months I've been either having friends over to play *Atlas Games'* **On The Edge,** or even driving on a hot summer's day in a car without air-conditioning to get to a mall where I know there'll be someone playing the game so that I can get "just one more game" in.

So what is it that could make a non-CCGer like me play **On The Edge**? Well, there are a lot of secondary considerations that keep me playing (such as a number of features which I think make **On The Edge** a better *game* than **Magic: the Gathering** and its rivals), but the initial push that made me try it in the first place, the thing which overcame my "it's a money pit" defences was the Omni-League.

Maybe it's because I've been in this hobby since the wargaming days, or maybe it's because of the thousands of dollars I've invested in it over those years, but nowadays I have a philosophy that a game should be complete when you buy it. While it's fine for companies producing roleplaying games to offer supplements, sourcebooks, adventure modules, and game-aid accessories, as long as the game can *possibly* be played using only the basic rules and some imagination, then it's got a reasonable chance with me. But if a game can't be played right out of the box, then I have neither the time nor the money to get it into shape to actually be playable.

And most CCGs fall into that category. While you could conceivably play **Magic: the Gathering** using only a single starter deck, you're bound to be disappointed by it in a short time. Your initial mix of cards probably won't lend itself to a strong deck, there will be so many obvious holes in it (and more will become apparent every time you see a neat card in someone else's hands) that you'll quickly want to buy more cards, and when you actually get into play with someone else who doesn't share your compunctions about CCGs, you'll find that your "Straight Out Of The Box" deck doesn't stand a chance against the expensively-stacked decks of everyone else playing the game. If you don't enjoy losing game after game and being continually frustrated by the riches of interesting cards waiting for you somewhere out there, you'll either be sucked in like all the rest, or leave the hobby in disgust.

The Omni-League is an invention of Jonathan Tweet, the creator of the **On The Edge** CCG. Basically, each member of the league buys a single starter deck, and uses those cards, and those cards only, in all games against other members of the league. You don't buy any boosters to add to the deck, you don't use all of your resources to trade your way to a killer deck. You play with the cards straight out of the box, having all the fun of a any other CCG without the expense.

Now, some of you out there might have a problem with that last sentence of mine. I mean, if you're not trading, not spending time on deck-construction, and not adding cards from **On The Edge**'s three expansion sets, how can you be having "all the fun of any other CCG"? And won't the games tend to get repetitious after a time?

With the "more money, more cards" factor removed, the **On The Edge** Omni-League rules satisfy the collecting urge in two ways, through ante and signatures. Of course, when they read the word "ante" all sorts of negative images flashed through the minds of the **Magic** fans before a final comforting "we don't play for ante any more" concluded the sequence. But Omni-League ante doesn't punish the loser as it rewards the winner, like in other CCGs, and there's no fear of anteing-up a random card that could destroy a carefully-crafted deck or force a player to put up his Black Lotus against an opponent's Atog.

In the Omni-League, players *select* their stakes, usually from their reserves (cards that came in the starter deck, but which don't have much use considering the rest of the card assortment in the box), and the opponents have to agree on the value of the stakes before play. And since money isn't a consideration in the League, "value" refers to how useful the card would be when added to your deck, not how much it would cost to buy in the singles market; whether a card is rare or common makes no difference if you don't have the right resources to get it into play, and a common card which increases the strength of one of your major hitters may be more useful than an isolated rare. One of the most successful wins my brother-in-law made against me was for an almost useless (to me) common Oppenheimer Contacts resource which *he* had a use for; in later games it enabled him to put his Astral Negatrons into play against my Astral-oriented deck.

While a win actually improves the strength of your deck, a loss, even of a rare card, doesn't weaken it any unless you put up a particularly useful card as stakes in

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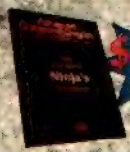
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hopes of winning a similarly useful card from your opponent. My Omni-League deck, "*Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Excreta Arcana*" (the loosest of translations renders this "Bugger you, I'm loaded with Mystic S—"), has a powerful card, Dr. Furchtegott Nusbaum, in it. My wife has The Dirt On Dr. Nusbaum, which is a rare and powerful card, but which has no use whatsoever in her deck. So, if she stakes it against my Dr. Nusbaum, whichever one of us wins the game gets a powerful combination of cards, and if I lose, I've lost one of my heavy hitters, but if *she* loses, the rare card she'll give up isn't a major loss to her.

Through active use of your reserves (*e.g.*, adding a Disinformation card that you normally don't include in your playing deck when you know you're facing a deck with a Secret that needs popping) and careful anteing (and winning), Omni players can use their *skill* at the game to slowly build a customized deck, instead of using their wallets to do the same thing in a day. As an example, my deck now stands at 65 cards, 5 more than when it started. But that number is a bit misleading, since I've actually lost 7 cards which I didn't much want and gained 12 more-useful cards from elsewhere. Over 18% of the cards in "*Honi Soit...*" today weren't there when I first opened its box, without having paid or traded for a single card.

In an effort to replace the normal collectability of the cards (since there's no realistic way to collect an entire set of On The Edge cards through Omni play), a new collectible aspect is added to the game. All Omni-League players come up with some sort of identifying mark (mine is just my initials, but other players I've won cards from have some interesting symbols and designs, like Fuzzface McMahon's painted wave-form, or Woody Eblom's rubber-stamp mark) with which they mark their stakes.

Whenever you lose, someone else gains a card with your mark on it, and if the card you lost was one which you'd won from someone else previously, it would have multiple marks on it. If the marks have interesting provenances (*e.g.*, if they were won at a convention in a distant location, or if the card once belonged to one of the game's designers), players with a good memory could use them as triggers for stories about the people and places the cards have seen (such as the cards that take me back to the inaugural game in my new house, when all players had to pay two antes: carrying a packed box up to the third floor for me as well as putting up a card).

The signatures don't add any *real* value to the cards (in fact, they reduce the cash value since the cards aren't in mint condition afterward) but they create a unique collectible feature of the game. In our local Omni-League group there's already one player who's willing to increase the value of his stakes if his opponent is willing to ante-up a card with more than one signature on it.

Just like children signing dollar bills or putting messages in bottles in hopes of getting the bill or a reply back from some strange vector, I'm patiently waiting for the day when I'll receive my own card in ante from someone whom I've never directly lost a card to.

All that said, why can't the same sort of thing work for Magic or some other CCG? After all, if you start a Magic Omni-League, you're bound to have a much bigger player base, and there won't be any need for you to drive horrendous distances for a game. The answers to this question depend on the two games themselves. In a number of ways, On The Edge is a more playable, easier to learn, and more enjoyable game than the other CCGs I've played.

For example, On The Edge has a well-developed background (instead of a generic fantasy setting that's only developing piecemeal over time) in the Over the Edge RPG, so much of its plot inspiration comes from that roleplaying source instead of from card-strategy ideas. The result is cards that represent actual individuals who are members of a wide range of conspiratorial groups (*e.g.*, Aleksandr Rominosky the Compton-conspiracy member) as opposed to generic creatures (orcs, kobolds, sprites) aligned with rather bland colour-based card divisions.

Magic has a limited number of colours defining card types, so decks built with them eventually fall into a familiar pattern; "Oh, another red/black deck". On The Edge has a much wider initial trait assortment, and more are added in the expansion sets. And while no one is likely to ever have an Omni-League deck solidly built on a single trait (you're just not going to get 40+ different Glorious Lords), it only takes a few cards that work together well to give a deck an individual flavour (so while my "*Honi Soit...*" and Keith Baker's "Calling Dr. Benway" both feature Dr. Nusbaum as major pullers, the decks have little else in common).

Although it suffers from an annoying tendency towards quick, lopsided victories in two-player games, On The Edge makes for a much better multi-player game than Magic, with tabletalk not only allowed but encouraged, and with opportunities for everyone at the table to participate in some way in almost every turn no matter what their own strategic position may be.

Play-strategy is as important (or more important, in the Omni-League) as advance deck-stacking strategy, since the position of cards on the table, the question of which character is carrying which piece of gear, and the order you perform multiple actions all have as strong an effect on your score as what cards you manage to get into play.

And instead of working to eliminate other players from the game, in On The Edge everyone plays to be the first to gain a set victory point total. The frustrating situation of having everyone gang up on one player early on to knock him out of the game in minutes doesn't happen here; while players still gang up on each other, even if your conspiracy is driven to a negative Influence Point total, you're still in the game, and still have a very good chance of coming from behind to win the game now that everyone's attention has moved on to some other target.

Unlike Magic, where the restrictive tournament rules seem to have taken over the game (since many players won't spend time assembling both tournament-legal and home-legal decks), On The Edge's tournament rules aren't as restrictive (yet), they are still rarely used outside of tournament-play, and they aren't the rules set used by the Omni-League.

And in an earlier review of On The Edge in another magazine, I complained about how hard to read the text on the cards was, especially from across a tabletop. Well, compared to Magic and Sim City, both because of size of images and

On the Edge

National Demo Days

Sept. 30 & Oct. 1

On Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 1995, stores all over the USA will be sponsoring *On the Edge* Demo Days! Visit these fine retailers to learn how to play *On the Edge*, receive a free starter deck and a "quick-start" sheet covering rules and deckbuilding, and a chance to win *On the Edge Demo Day* t-shirts. You'll also find the new issue of *Shadis* at the same store, featuring articles about *On the Edge* and a special sample card!

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the use of words instead of icons (*e.g.*, the simple word "crank" when discussing a card's ability to be "cranked", as opposed to a miniscule little skewed-"T" icon or microscopic "road curves" sign to represent the simple word "tap"), **On The Edge** cards are glaring beacons of legibility. Playing those other games, I actually had trouble reading numbers on *my own* cards, let alone my opponent's, so I now publicly retract any previous **On The Edge** legibility complaints I've made.

Are there other features of Omni-League **On The Edge** that endear it to me? Well, in Omni-League play there's no chance of running into one of those dreaded degenerate decks that can spoil an entire gaming session. While it can be difficult to find people willing to invest in another CCG after **Magic**, new players are intrigued by this low-cost CCG alternative. **On The Edge** is easy to teach to newcomers, so you don't have to invest a lot of time at recruiting and training new opponents, nor do you have to carry a binder full of errata and card rulings to friendly games just in case your opponent hasn't seen this week's round of card-bannings. You never have to worry about a poorly thought-out card in some expansion set making your Omni deck powerless because of some synergistic effect.

Maybe it's the roleplaying origins of the card game, maybe it's the strange or cartoonish artwork, or maybe it just grows out of attempts to pronounce the many non-English names of characters, but **On The Edge** seems to encourage a more relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere, characterized by jokes, talking, and attempts to make (and break) temporary alliances, with a lot less intense concentration on the game, even in tournament or Omni-League games when players stand to win or lose something tangible in the end. (To someone who's finding that he has less and less time for gaming, and who misses the social aspect of roleplaying as well as the actual gaming, this is an important consideration.)

And probably the most important feature of all: since you only play with a single deck of cards, you can carry all your Omni-League cards to GenCon in a pocket, instead of having to devote an entire piece of your airplane carry-on luggage to your steel-lined card case. For an $8 investment, how can you lose? ❑

...And Now, the Rules!

These rules may be reproduced freely for personal use.

The Omni-League is a non-localized league of **On The Edge** fans playing with a limited number of cards. It gives us a common ground when we meet at conventions, and allows total newcomers to join easily even in games with the world's best players.

The rules of the Omni-League are as follows.

1) Your set is an **On The Edge** starter deck. You may use first printing or Unlimited starters, but Standard starters tend to be better decks because they are more balanced.

Dedicate a deck as your league set before you open it. (Don't open a bunch of starters and choose the best as your league deck.) A "set" is all the cards you have dedicated to the Omni-League. A "deck" is the 40+ cards you choose to play with in a given game. Your "reserves" are the cards in your set that are not in your deck.

You can alter your deck between games, so you can come back at someone who beat you before with cards from your reserves that may help you against that player's particular deck.

2) Standard rules (not first printing rules, not tournament rules) apply. All errata are in effect.

3) You may play other Omni-Leaguers anywhere, any time, in any number. You may even play teams, if teammates can agree on how to divvy up "stakes."

4) The typical game is played for stakes: one card of the owner's choice from each player. It's best to agree on stakes so that they're useful to the other players. Otherwise you'll just wind up exchanging marginal cards. Winning stakes is the closest you can get to trading in the league, so use it to your benefit.

When you put a card up as a stake you don't have to remove it from play for that game. If you want to play with that stake card in your deck you may, as long as you can remember which card it was. Each player's stake must be one card. This means that your win-loss record is recorded by the number of cards in your set. For each other player defeated, you get +1 card. For each other player to whom you lose, you get -1 card, so if you wind up with 57 cards in your set, you've lost to three more people than you've defeated. The number of cards in your set provides a rough estimate of your deck's power, but as most stakes come from the players' reserves, decks generally get stronger through play.

Rare cards are rare in the Omni-League, and some might not be in the League at all. You may have to search for players who have the rare cards you want a shot at.

5) Put your initials or other distinctive mark on the front of every card you lose as stakes so that the card's previous owner(s) can be identified. Use the same mark or initials for all cards lost in stakes.

6) No trading, no bringing in cards from other decks or boosters, no playing for stakes against non-Omni-League decks, *etc.* The only way to lose or gain cards is by playing against other Omni-Leaguers. Also, throwing games to facilitate the exchange of cards is effectively trading.

7) If you drop to 50 cards or lower, you may retire the deck and get another one. If you drop to 40 cards or lower, *you must* retire the deck.

8) Obviously, this is an honor-based system. Play for fun and be honorable.

9) You may "fire blanks" (play without stakes).

10) I'm not administrating the league; I'm playing in it. If you see me at a con, and you feel up to it, you can dare to play me.

I'd like to see folks naming their decks. At cons, players can meet like gunslingers to duke it out. My deck is the "Brain Food" deck. With the Edge List (send a "subscribe" message to on-the-edge-request@gojira.monsta.com), the Edge folder on AOL (keyword: gix), the **On The Edge** ftp site (ftp.io.com/pub.Atlas), and other media, we'll be able to brag about our decks and our conquests.

11) You and the other players may use any house rules or variants to which you all

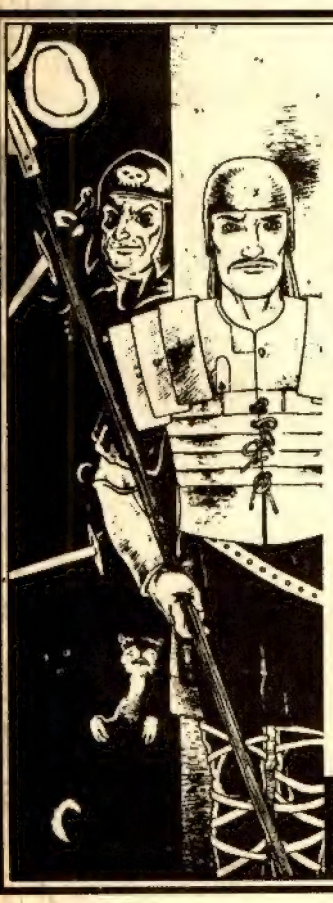
agree. You may, for example, play tournament rules as a variant.

11a) A variant I'd encourage you to try for multi-player games is "Vicious Circle." In this variant, if you lose but the person on your left wins, you keep your stakes. (It's sort of like pulling a draw.) The easiest way to determine stakes is to have the person on your right pick one from your reserves; the person on the right will get the card if he wins, and the person on your left doesn't care what your stakes are because if he wins he doesn't get the card anyway. The Vicious Circle variant can keep a "king-maker" player from determining the outcome of the game based on non-game motives, such as friendship or grudges. It's designed to draw your attacks to the players on your right, who have recently taken their turns, not the player on your left, how may be on his last legs after being attacked by the other players. If you win, record a number of wins equal to the number of stakes you take (since you have not actually defeated the player to your right). If you draw (the person on your left wins), record no result. If you lose to anyone but the person on your left, record one loss.

12) "Alternate Reality Omni-League." As it draws only from the regular assortment of cards, the Omni-League represents the most basic forces at work on Al Amarja. **On The Edge** expansions represents new forces at work. These expansions will not become part of the standard Omni-League, but you can play in "alternate realities" where these forces are in play. Varying your Omni-League by adding expansion cards allows for people who play each other a lot to see some extra variety in the game once it's been established whose deck is better. The Alternate Reality rules, however, keep these extra cards from affecting your basic deck or altering future Omni-League games, thus preserving the Control-Freak purity that I hold so dear.

12a) You and the other Omni-Leaguers may decide to add cards from expansions (one booster per expansion per deck). While you have any of these extra cards in your deck, you are playing "Alternate Reality" Omni-League and no regular Omni-League cards may change hands. *You may only offer these "alternate reality" cards as stakes during an "alternate reality" game.* If you run completely out of cards from a given expansion, you can add a booster in again.

12b) At the beginning of each game, you and your opponents agree on which expansions can be represented: none, **Cut-Ups** only, **Shadows** only, **Cut-Ups** and **Arcana** but not **Shadows**, *etc.* You must re-tune your decks to these specifications. When you go back to regular Omni-League, you have to take all these cards out, and you may not offer them for stakes. Keep cards from expansions you're not currently using; you'll use those cards again (not fresh boosters) when you play Alternate Reality again. ❑



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Sir Jeteki quickened his pace and moved his hand closer to the hilt of his sword as he scanned the shadows for signs of movement. He had left his friends back at the bar and his armor back at the palace. Now he was seriously regretting the entire outing. Suddenly, two men stepped out of the alley just ahead of him. As they drew short swords from under their dark cloaks, Jeteki glanced over his shoulder to see a third man stepping out behind him, a glint of metal reflecting moonlight under his cloak as well. He quickly considered his options. Three on one was a dangerous fight, even for the greatest swordsman in Trent, especially without armor, and there was no knowing how many more were lurking in the shadows. As the two in front closed on him, spreading to encircle him, Jeteki drew his sword and slipped it past one man's feeble parry and into his gut, dropping him instantly. He nimbly dodged the attack of the second thug and turned to face both remaining assailants while slowly backing in the direction of the city gates, and safety....

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"The cave people had apparently worshipped some beast, and as we fled the cave, it appeared. It was huge. No, not what you're thinking, but truly immense. Forget armored scales, its mere bulk made any thought of killing it with sword or spear ridiculous. I considered that there were one or two spells I could think of that might *kill it, but I didn't want to get close enough to find out. My companions apparently agreed, and we all cowered in the ditch and hoped it didn't notice us as it spread its wings and flew away."*

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"Nazis...I Hate These Guys"

Putting 'Real Life' villains into your campaign

By Dave Dollar © 1995 with Matt August ❖ Illustrated by Matt Wilson © 1995

As gamers, we always ache for our campaigns to capture the power and exhilaration of the movies. Daring last stands, glorious victories and dismal failures all mix into the melting pot of our tabletop dramas in an attempt to create the perfect adventure. The creations of the media inspire us, so it's no wonder that we enjoy, from time to time, gaming in media. By setting our adventures in environments that we have seen in the movies - sometimes even interacting with our favorite movie and TV characters - we can better visualize the drama.

So we game in media. *Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Star Trek* and a dozen other media productions have taken this fascination all the way to the point of creating entire games around the media's setting and characters - and we eat it up. But it's the setting and the characters that draw us. The clarity of our vision into the media world entices us, because that clarity carries the tone of the environment. With that tone, we can turn up the emotional "volume" of our campaign, and that makes for good gaming.

With that in mind, it is important to understand enough about your setting so that you can background it effectively. When you present your players with a seamless and complete background for play, it builds up a powerful adventurous emotion. With all that build-up, somebody's going to get their havoc wreaked, and you'd better have an A-1 list of villains to take the players' brunt. Without good bad guys, your meticulously crafted background will lose its zest.

The Klingons joined the Federation, and the Romulans made peace. In *Babylon 5*, even the Minbari realized that we are all

one in the brotherhood of the universe. They even humanized the Borg! (I understand that the Humane Society is now starting an adoption program for Borg. Be sure to have them fixed before you take them home, or they'll assimilate all over the furniture.)

Where did the bad guys go? We're gamers! We're heroes! Without bad guys, we're out of a job! Maybe we should form a union...

Fortunately, we don't have to look any farther than our own planet to find the perfect archetypal villains. Fanatic, imperialistic, senselessly cruel, organized and plentiful, with their fingers into everything you can imagine. Almost every villainous race or creature in any genre is based, at least in part, on their bold exploits.

Yes, I said 'bold.'

They may be Plato's Ideal group of toe-sucking scumwaffles, but you have to admit, they've got some serious cojones. They sure don't sit home and crochet! They are the Nazis, and like it or not, despite schools right here in the U.S. teaching our kids that the Holocaust never happened, they are an indelible part of human history - no matter how much we'd like to forget about them.

There have been scores of movies about the Nazis. *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *Force Ten From Navarone*, *Schindler's List*.... I could go on for days listing them, but the point is that Nazi Europe is an idea playground for tabletop drama in media. With good background and toning you can take your players right there. So, fellow gamers, let's get to it!

Anyone can play a soldier or a commando or an assassin fighting against Hitler, but the subject of clandestine civilian resistance is significantly less documented. Movies such as *Schindler's List* and *Swing Kids* bring us a fresh view on this subject. To run a resistance campaign one must be intimately familiar with the time period of 1933 to 1945....

The Era of the Reich

For really good backgrounding, you must know the type of place the world was in the 1933-1945 era. What was going on in the worlds of music, sports and cinema? What did the Americans and Europeans of the Nazi Era do when they weren't getting tossed into work camps or death camps, or getting beat into a fleshy ooze by the Gestapo? To run a proper Nazi era campaign, it is your responsibility as the GM to know these things. With a good base of knowledge you will know the gossip on the lips of the people, and your 1933-1945 NPCs will come alive!

Radio: During the Nazi era we had no television. Instead, families would gather in the evenings around the radio set, which in those days was more like a piece of furniture and less like a household appliance. Classical, Swing and Big Band were the big styles of music. Entertainment, in the form of radio shows, was presented by big, brand-name products. Ovaltine sponsored Little Orphan Annie. Amos and Andy came to us courtesy of Rinse-O laundry detergent and The Jell-O Show brought Jack Benny and Fred Allen almost every night. Radio was the medium of choice and kept us in touch with the world of the Nazi era.

Sports: The two favorite sports followed by the people of the Nazi era are good old American Baseball and American Boxing. In England and the rest of Europe, Soccer was very popular, but information is limited because the people of Europe were too busy playing "Keep Away From Hitler" to really concentrate on their football games. In boxing, the Heavyweight Champion of the world in 1939 was Joe Louis. The Middleweight Champion — almost as well known — was Rocky Graziano. In baseball, Joltin' Joe Dimaggio was the slugger to beat all sluggers (almost as good as the Babe). These were the names on the lips of the people when they talked sports.

Movies: Hollywood was the birthplace of dreams in the W.W. II era, just as it is today. The movie that everyone was talking about in W.W. II was *Gone With the Wind*, followed closely by *Casablanca*. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released in 1937. Elizabeth Taylor was making her film debut as a hyper-compassionate thirteen-year-old in *National Velvet*. The world was in love with Bette Davis and debutantes in floor-length gowns swooned over Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable.

Fashion: Paris was the home of fashion in Europe and the U.S. All good-looking or stylish clothing (the two do not necessarily go together) got their inspiration from Parisian designers. In fashion, men wore double-breasted suits (silk was the best if you had the dough), patent leather shoes and finely pressed shirts of neutral colors such as tan, gray, light blue or white. Gaudy colors were considered very unfashionable on men.

In the color department, women had a bit more freedom. A proper lady's dress or skirt should not come above her knee. Her arms should be covered as well. Low necklines were punishable by death. Ladies wore high heels most of the time. Heels of the W.W. II era were not like the deadly stilettos of the '90s; they were thick and wooden, ideal for bludgeoning Nazis (or bull moose) into unconsciousness. Younger women could sometimes get away with wearing shorter skirts, although this was frowned upon.

Everyone wore hats. Women's hats were usually equipped with a veil, and festooned with gaudy ornamentation - resembling a recently killed peacock or an entire pot of geraniums. Trenchcoats were the standard in inclement weather, for men and women alike.

Mannerswise, the people of the Nazi era were better behaved in public than we are today. Upon entering a building, it was customary to remove your hat, and men were expected to stand when a lady entered a room. Chairs were pulled out for women, and doors were held open as a gentlemanly standard.

Lifestyles: Almost without exception, everyone from 1933 to 1945 smoked enough to create their own high-pollution zones. Cigarettes were carried in metal cases and lit with the ever popular Zippo-style lighter.

The night life, in cafes and restaurants, was the primary form of recreation. Establishments like Rick's Cafe Americain (*Casablanca*) did a thriving business. People seldom went 'out on the town' in street clothes, however. Fine dress was the status quo. Cafes usually had a piano on site and at least one 'canary' on the stage during peak hours, to mesmerize the patrons with her voice. In Berlin the hot nightspot was

Travel: Not all of your players will be military people. some may be fortune hunters, archeologists, travelers, thieves, con men or any other profession. As such, the military might not be paying for your travel. In that event, here are some sample fares for point-to-point travel by various means.

AIR:

New York to London (round trip): $320

Chicago to San Francisco (round trip): $207

New York to Chicago or London to Paris: $86.31

SEA:

Tour of Europe (60 days, 11 countries): $495.00

Trans-Atlantic (point to point U.S. to U.K.): $120

RAIL:

Chicago to San Francisco (round trip): $80.50

English monthly commuter train pass: $10.39

Paris to Hamburg: $19.50

Goods: Unless your character sucks gas, or ingests a sizable amount of Nazi lead, everyone still needs to eat. Here are some examples of what foodstuffs cost in the 1930s.

Steak Dinner (at an average restaurant): 20 cents

Cheap meal of soup and bread: 5 cents

Franks and sauerkraut: 10 cents

Coffee: 26 cents/lb.

Potatoes: 2 cents/lb.

Other goods were also ridiculously inexpensive:

New Car (average): $585.00
Used Car (average): $125.00
Used Car (cheap-o death trap): $57.50
Bicycle: $10.95
Wool Sweater: $1.69
Leather Shoes: $1.79
Stetson Hat (Indy-style fedora): $5.00
Cigarettes: 15 cents/pack
Lighter: 39 cents
Gasoline: 18 cents/gallon
Stiff Drink: 6 cents
Movie Admission: 25 cents

the Scala Theatre, a favorite "gin joint" of the SS and, in particular, Joseph Goebbels.

Politics: 1933-1945 was perhaps the world's single most volatile era. All over the world, Communism, Fascism, Democracy, Socialism and other, lesser known ideals vied ferociously for control. America also had strong, deeply rooted Communist and Socialist organizations trying to win support. In Germany, the Communist movement was the strongest of the minority politicos and would eventually make an ideal scapegoat for Hitler and his followers. The major political figures of W.W. II were as follows:

America: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, later succeeded by Harry Truman.

England: Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, later succeeded by Winston Churchill.

France: Premier Charles de Gaulle. After the capitulation of France in 1940, de Gaulle would flee to England, leaving Marshall Petain in charge of Vichy France.

Germany: President Paul von Hindenburg presided over the German Parliament at the Reichstag. Later, Hindenburg would name Hitler Chancellor of Germany. Hitler would burn the Reichstag and assume his post as the Führer.

Russia: Joseph Stalin - quite a totalitarian butcher in his own right.

Spain: Generalissimo Francisco Franco

Italy: *Il Duce* Benito Mussolini

The Rise of Hitler

A little over fifty years ago, the sun rose on one of the single darkest days of modern history. It was January 30, 1933, when Adolf Hitler was named Chancellor of a desperate and depressed post-W.W.I Germany. It was the dawn of the Third Reich - a clarion of meticulous terror and persecution unrivaled by any other era in history. Less than seven years later, the depressed economies and underprepared armies of Europe were forced to straighten their spines and walk out to face the most fearsome war engine Europe has ever fostered. It took a special type of fighting man to confront the Nazis - have you got what it takes?

Hitler Comes to Power

The Nazi Party was pretty well hated by everyone. Even the German people despised it. You might ask yourself, "Self, if the German people hated the Nazis so much, how did they ever get into power?" This would be a good question. Ever since the depression of 1929, the German people had been thoroughly demoralized by the floundering of their economy. National growth was poor, unemployment was rampant, and inflation was out of control. Germany needed a savior. Hitler presented

Luger P-08

himself and the National Socialist German Workers' Party as that savior, while at the same time scapegoating the Jewish minority as the source of the national problem.

The Nazis had rallied for previous elections, hoping to take control of the Reichstag. However, they were never popular with anyone but themselves. Most Germans believed that if the Nazi party came to power, they would suffer another war. Because of these well-founded public fears, almost no one would vote for them.

But Hitler and his master of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, had a plan. They would overwhelm the people with an unrivaled display of discipline, organization and strength. Borrowing the idea of having 'Party Stormtroopers' from Stalin, Hitler had already created the SA. These were his brown-shirted, paramilitary Nazi supporters. They believed in the superiority of the Aryan race, and that the Jews and the Communists were the root of the Fatherland's problems. In their devotion, they were close to fanatic.

As the elections of 1932 were drawing to a close, Hitler directed massive marches in key German states and bombarded the people with propaganda. SA troopers staged huge parades and demonstrations. Torchlit processions under the swastika would end in rallies and book burnings, set to music and lights. Spectacle, grandeur, pomp and circumstance would enthrall the people. The Nazi Party was like a fighting cat, backed against the wall - arching its back to seem more powerful. In the state of Lippe-Detmold alone, there were over 900 Nazi rallies in ten days! Parades, speakers, agitators, Nazi newsmen, live music, bonfires. Hitler himself spoke at sixteen rallies! This deluge of propaganda worked. Noting the amazing display of discipline and unity, President Hindenburg named Hitler Chancellor of Germany, despite having less than 40% of the popular vote.

Naturally, as the new Chancellor, Hitler would need protection. From his SA party members, he drew the toughest, most unscrupulous, most fanatic members of his flock — the elite, black-shirted party stormtroopers, the SS. Originally limited in scope to Hitler's private bodyguard, the SS would grow throughout the rise of the Third Reich. Eventually, they would perform Gestapo police activities, form elite infantry and armored units, fulfill propaganda duties, and carry out espionage/counter-espionage.

Still, the rest of the German government was not about to let this little madman run rampant. He would still have to follow governmental procedures to pass his legislation. Hitler submitted to this — right up until enough German government officials were bought with bribes, or cowed with SA threats to pass certain key pieces of legislation. These new laws allowed Hitler to rule with a freer hand. He was now practically the *de facto* dictator of Germany.

The Politics of Terror

Having achieved a good political foothold, the next step in the Nazi domination was threefold: consolidate its power, eliminate its enemies, and make the civilian population too afraid to oppose it. Hitler clinched his singular command over the German people on June 30, 1934. Known as the "Rohm Putsch" or "The Night of the Long Knives," this night would be Hitler's first big bloodbath.

Under cover of darkness, without warning or explanation, over 150 of Adolf Hitler's real or imagined enemies were dragged from their beds by SS stormtroopers, driven to a place of execution, and shot. Most of the condemned were SA party members, including Hitler's personal friend and commander of the SA, Ernst Rohm. Other victims included the former Chancellor, General Kurt von Schleicher, and his wife; Erich Klausener, leader of the Catholic Action; and Hitler's old friend and priest, Bernhard Stempfle (who helped him write *Mein Kampf*.) Hitler personally ordered and supervised the executions. He claimed that the killings were a matter of National Security, and they were retroactively declared legal by the Reich cabinet.

Upon hearing of this atrocity, the people of the Fatherland were shocked. Those right-thinkers who had not been mesmerized by the Nazi Party's promises and propaganda were flatly appalled and disgusted. The Night of the Long Knives earned the SS its wings as a death squad. In the next three weeks alone, SS troopers would arrest and execute over 100,000 Germans. By the time the German people knew the true nature of the beast — a beast they had put into power by their own inaction and shortsightedness — it was too late.

The final blow in the campaign of terror occurred November 9, 1938. Called *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Broken Glass), it was the beginning of the end for the Jews, the Communists or any right-thinking non-Nazi. In supposed retaliation for the murder of a German diplomat by a Polish Jew in Paris, SA and SS destroyed Jewish businesses, burned synagogues, and murdered Jews in the streets. Although plenty of anti-Semitic policies had been in force for some time, there had never been such blatant brutality sanctioned in the past.

Now the people of Germany were truly afraid of the Nazis. Don't speak! Anyone could be listening! Don't question! They can hear you. They will beat down your door and you will vanish in the night! This is how less than 4 million active Nazis held the rest of the Germany (approximately 68.5 million people) in terror. After *Kristallnacht*, all Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David prominently on their chest at all times.

In between the Rohm Putsch and *Kristallnacht*, Hitler was far from inactive. Non-party members were gradually mounded with heavier and heavier restrictions, while Hitler's supporters were rewarded. Businesses of citizens who were deemed "Politically Unreliable" were slowly boycotted to death. Jews and other enemies of the Reich were sent to the recently formed concentration camps. The Gestapo patrolled the streets day and night, and propaganda filled the air.

Countdown

The suspicions of the German people — that Hitler was going to bring them into another war — were not unfounded. It was his plan from the very beginning. From his installation as Chancellor to the famous Blitzkrieg of Poland, the Führer occupied his time by occupying lands. Here is a timeline:

October 14, 1933 - Germany leaves the League of Nations on grounds that restricting the build-up of her armies by her neighbors was unfair.

January 26, 1934 - Germany signs a 10 year non-aggression pact with Poland. (Right...)

July 25, 1934 - Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss of Austria is murdered by Nazis.

March 7, 1936 - Germany re-occupies the Rhineland. This was a bold move on Hitler's part, because he really did not have enough troops to do it. The Rhineland had been declared a demilitarized zone in the Treaty of Versailles. Surprisingly, he met no resistance.

November 1, 1936 - Hitler and Mussolini sign the Rome-Berlin Axis, formally declaring their alliance.

March 1938 - *Anschluss*. Thus was the union between Austria and Germany. Another bloodless invasion — Austria grudgingly surrendered without a fight.

September 29, 1938 - Germany takes the Sudetenland (western Czechoslovakia) in another bloodless occupation. Again it was, "...to protect the rights of Germans across the world."

August 31, 1939 - The Blitzkrieg of Poland. Poland fell to Germany in only two weeks. This was the beginning of W.W. II.

Life Under Hitler

Day to Day in the Reich

Your characters, as they work and play and fight and die in the Third Reich will undoubtedly be exposed to some day to day life. After all, it can't all be a Blitzkrieg.

Before the Nazis took power, there were a number of interesting political and social events that Germans involved themselves in. Numerous political and religious groups for youth and adults were a large part of German life. Some of the more noteworthy groups were:

The NSDAP: Hitler's National Socialist German Worker's Party, AKA the Nazi Party. They rallied and bullied their opposition with their SA and SS stormtroopers. Some of their popular battle cries were, "The Needs of the People Before the Needs of the Individual," "Work and Bread for All," and "Down With the Tyranny of Investment Capital!" (!?)

The Red Falcons: An Anti-Fascist workers union for youth and adults. Directly opposed to the NSDAP.

The Hitler Youth: Hitler's Boy Scouts from Hell. The Hitler Youth dressed in a watered-down version of the Gestapo blacks; ceremonial, nickel-plated dagger included. (Wash in cold water only, tumble dry.) The Hitler Jungend, or H.J., was designed to groom young men for future service in the Wehrmacht, Gestapo or Luftwaffe.

The League of German Girls: Hitler's Girl Scouts. Similar in organization to the Hitler Youth, the League of German Girls carried out less brutal tasks within the Reich. Young women would make crafts for the elderly or unemployed, and would collect for the Winter Aid and Strength Through Joy campaigns. Frequently, they would undertake long hiking trips or marches as they sang good old German songs.

The Catholic Action: A youth and adult organization of the Catholic Church opposed to the NSDAP.

Der Schwingheim: The Swing Kids. Yes indeed, there really were Swing Kids in the Third Reich — just like the movie. (See that movie, by the way. It's very cool.) The Schwingheim were the Nazi Germany equivalent to the Hippies of the 60's. Directly opposed to the Hitler Youth.

As 1939 ground closer and closer the people of Germany and its occupied puppet states became more and more heavily oppressed. The Gestapo could arrest anyone for any reason. SA and SS could and did arrest whomever they wanted. If a civilian refused to do anything a ranking party member requested, they could find themselves shipped to concentration camp in a heartbeat. Nazis would usually ransack the houses of people as they pleased, before or after that person had been arrested. The SA thugs were especially guilty of this. Known members of political groups that had opposed the Nazis in the past were under constant scrutiny by the Gestapo.

The Paper Chase

There are three documents that German civilians coveted: employment books, ration books and birth certificates.

Employment books were a primary lever used by the Gestapo to cow the citizens of Germany. An employment book was a small booklet, similar to a ration book. It identified your profession, vital statistics and your party affiliation. Without an employment book, you could not get a job. The SA, SS and Gestapo could confiscate your employment book at will and not return it to you. Often, employers driven by greed would do the same. In this way, they were able to force workers into accepting slave wages and inhuman working conditions.

Ration books were small booklets used to ration goods to civilians in times of war. Each time someone bought butter or bacon or beans or anything at all, a stamp was placed in the appropriate box in the ration book. When you used all the "Corn Flakes" stamps in your ration book, you couldn't buy any more corn flakes until the next month, when the ration book was reissued. Every country in W.W. II used ration books, from America to Albania.

Birth certificates were extremely important in the Reich — especially if you were Jewish or the son or daughter of a known Communist sympathizer. One needed birth certificates for most everything we need them for today. You could also use your birth certificate to get new (or additional) ration books and employment books.

Resistance members did a huge trade in forged documents of this sort. The most notable use of the forged document was to change the identity of Jews before they were shipped off to "special treatment." As a player, you have almost limitless room to expand on the forged document trade. Transporting, forging, and distributing precious birth certificates can get your players in deep Kim Chee — and that means fun!

For the "politically unreliable" or the Jews, life in the Third Reich was a nightmare. Jewish workers and shop owners gradually came under heavier and heavier persecution as the years wore on. Stores would be boycotted or burned outright and looted by the SA. Small merchants slowly disappeared as larger, Nazi-backed stores like Woolworth's, Oppenheim Electric and Teitz's took over. In any job, wages were small, yet garnishment was heavy in the form of "voluntary contributions" to the Labor Front, The National Socialist Wel-

fare Agency, Winter Aid and Strength Through Joy. The Winter Aid Program was supposedly a voluntary welfare program, but in actuality, it was the Nazi officery's 'Line My Pocket Fund.' Strength Through Joy provided loyal Nazi workers with incentives; not only cash, but vacation packages and (supposedly) Volkswagens. The saying was, "For Every Member of the Volk, A Volkswagen," but the Reich never delivered on that promise.

Some other facts about civilian life in the Third Reich:

"Drummer" brand cigarettes were the smoke of choice of the SA, SS and German civilians. If your players were to encounter a possible German agent, their choice of smokes might be the critical clue that tips them off. Drummer cigarettes were reputedly filterless and exceptionally strong and nasty.

The *Sturmer* was the major Nazi newspaper in Germany — mostly filled with Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitic slander.

The common derogatory nickname for a prominent party member or wealthy, aristocratic Nazi stooge was "Golden Pheasant."

That was life in the Third Reich from a civilian standpoint. The next thing we should look into here is the presence of the para-military: the freedom fighters.

Resisting Hitler

Throughout World War II, the various indigenous resistance movements played a pivotal role in undermining Nazi rule. Every single country Hitler occupied had one or more resistance groups deeply entrenched within. These groups would mostly perform anti-propaganda operations, espionage operations or sabotage. In some cases they fought the Nazis openly, but these occurrences were rare because, for the most part, the undertrained and outgunned freedom fighters got creamed in stand-up fights with the SS or the Wehrmacht.

Almost without exception resistance groups in occupied countries relied heavily on the aid of the Allies. Allied weapons, food, medical supplies and propaganda supplements were frequently airdropped under cover of night to resistance fighters all over Europe. In fact, in 1940–1942, both the British and Americans formed bureaus specifically dedicated to assisting resistance groups. In 1940 the UK formed the SOE (Special Operations Executive.) In 1942 the US formed the OSS (Office of Strategic Services.) These organizations within the Allies shipped supplies, special agents, commandos and spies to the occupied countries of Europe. In the movie *Force 10 From Navarone*, Force 10 was an US Ranger commando group operated by the Office of Strategic Services in conjunction with the British SOE.

The SOE and the OSS are not to be confused with British or American Intelligence. These bureaus were separate and autonomous from the intelligence agencies, sometimes operating side by side without the knowledge of the other's presence.

Though the SOE and the OSS labored to unite and coordinate the resistance groups, resistance leaders were normally loose cannons, prone to disobeying orders and conducting their own operations.

In addition to guerrilla strikes against Nazi forces, moving information and propaganda was one of the major pastimes of resistance groups. There were two basic means by which this was accomplished. The first was radio. Even though transmitters were rare and difficult to obtain (especially powerful ones,) resistance groups all over Europe transmitted regular war reports and anti-Nazi Propaganda. Resistance radio broadcasts were also used to direct covert operations by Allied espionage, insurgency and resistance teams, using coded messages. Such phrases as, "...the chair is against the wall...", "...John has a long mustache..." and "...the carrots are cooked..." would signal operatives to take specific actions. (Note: "The carrots are cooked..." was the Allied signal to the French resistance that the Normandy invasion had begun.) If you were a Wehrmacht intelligence analyst listening to one of these broadcasts, you would be flat stumped at what it meant. Resistance radio also helped inspire the subjugated peoples of Europe with hope. Exiled French leader Charles de Gaulle and Dutch Queen Wilhelmina both made regular broadcasts to their countrymen from BBC transmitters in London. Americans also got into the act, sending powerful short-wave transmissions to occupied Europe.

The Nazis were not unaware of this subversive activity. The penalty for being caught listening to a subversive radio

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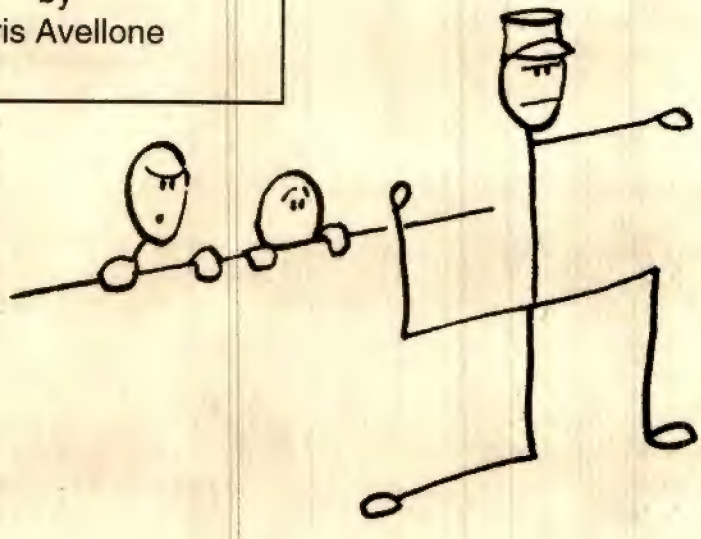
Chris Avellone



"Dammit! Nazis."

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broadcast was nearly as good as a death sentence. In 1943, the Nazis began confiscating radio sets in Holland. Still, most people had more than one radio, and when the SS and Gestapo came round to collect, they got the old and broken radios more often than not. Sealed in soundproofed cellars or false roofs in barns, families from Amsterdam to Athens would turn out the lights and huddle around the soft radio to hear the distant sound of hope. By the end of the war, fully one out of five radio sets were still concealed in homes and regularly used.

In conjunction with radio broadcasts, freedom fighters would stretch the extra mile in the more dangerous occupation of clandestine publishing: taking news and propaganda from radio transmissions and translating it to the printed word. From the very beginning of the Nazi escalation — as Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Joseph Goebbels began bringing more and more news services "in line" to print Nazi propaganda resistance — newspapers began to sprout everywhere. Major problems with this type of medium, however, were printing and distribution. A rotary printing press was difficult to acquire and harder to conceal, due to its loud, unmistakable noise. In Poland and Belgium especially, smaller hand-presses were carefully concealed in soundproofed basements in the city, or housed in sheds out in the forests.

Paper and ink for resistance printing was often smuggled to the presses by way of a farmer's cart — burying the supplies under a load of hay or produce. One had to have nerves of clear blue steel to operate a resistance newspaper: there were plenty of opportunities for someone to leak your operations to the Gestapo and distribution requirements made it difficult to keep awareness of your activities to a small group.

Resistance operations were normally conducted using the 'Three Man' system. When moving people or goods (paper and ink, for example) each underground member knew only two other people in the underground: the person he got the goods (information, people, etc.) from, and the person he gave them to. In this manner, if one resistance member was caught or compromised, the entire organization would not be exposed.

One of the more successful examples of resistance printing occurred on November 9, 1943. When the Nazis took over Brussels' principal newspaper, *Le Soir*, members of the Belgian resistance secretly printed an exact duplicate of the *Le Soir* and used the now-German *Le Soir* distribution system to deliver thousands of copies, by bicycle, to their regular news stands in the city. This version of the city's largest paper was full of nothing but anti-Nazi propaganda.

Here is a breakdown of resistance groups you should know:

Albania: Fighting against the Italian occupation (such as it was,) the Albanian resistance was divided into two parts. The first part was the Northern Albanian Resistance; fiercely independent lone wolves who lived an almost tribal lifestyle in the mountains. These were loyalists to the exiled King Zog of Albania and were primarily concerned with seeing him returned to the throne.

If you have never heard of the Northern Albanian resistance, it's because the were almost limitlessly ineffective and disorganized. They played only a small role in W.W.II and were pathetically underequipped. ("Hold still, you Nazi scum, whilst I bludgeon you with this empty ouzo bottle!") It might be fun to have your characters get lost in the paperwork shuffle on the way to help out the Albanians and end up in Serbia fighting Panzer Blitzkriegs with a rusty spoon.

The Southern Albanian resistance was a little better, but seldom liked to deal with the British or U.S. aid bureaus. They were primarily supplied by the Russians, and when they could get a break from fighting their Northern brothers, they would actually go out and shoot some bad guys. The leader of the Southern Albanian resistance was Enver Hoxha.

Belgium: Organizing resistance went a bit better in Belgium...kind of. When Hitler took Belgium, the Belgian ruling cabinet was exiled to London. King Leopold stayed behind to be a puppet ruler. He always considered himself a Nazi prisoner in his own home, and such he was. But if he had got the hell out, as his much-wiser cabinet did, the Belgians would have had a much easier time in the resistance department — strong, free leaders could do wonders.

There were two resistance groups of note in Belgium, the *Legion Belge* (loyal to Leopold) and the *Front de L'Independance* (organized by the Belgian Communist Party). These two groups hated each other. Eventually, (July 1943) the government-in-exile took control and ordered the two groups to combine into the *Armee Secrete*. This group numbered over 50,000 and was instructed to operate under Allied orders.

Czechoslovakia: Constantly beset by schisms, the Czechs had a number of resistance groups that never seemed to be moving in the same direction. The two big ones were the Defence of the Nation and OSVO. Their biggest victory came May 27, 1942, when SOE operatives, flown in from London, lobbed a grenade down the shorts of Reinhard Heydrich, the Reichsprotector of Bohemia and Moravia and head of the Gestapo. In response, the Nazis eradicated the village of Lidice.

Denmark: The Danish resistance was set up very quickly and thrived under the relaxed (almost lazy) way the Germans ran their country. They were called the Danish Freedom Council, and they were surprisingly willing to cooperate with Allied coordination. Despite lax Nazi security and extensive support from the SOE and OSS, however, the Danish Freedom Council was pretty ineffective.

France: Say "resisting the Nazis," and the French immediately come to mind. When France capitulated to Germany, the country became divided. In the south and central areas of France, the French pretended autonomy as a German puppet state under Marshall Petain. The rest of the country (the part that wouldn't just lie down for the Nazis) was ruled by Nazi Military Governor Von Stuelphagel. French patriot Charles de Gaulle was in exile in London.

Petain and his Vichy government were firmly against any resistance — their policy was one of total cooperation with Hitler. While in London, de Gaulle ran the French resistance through his Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action (BCRA). The Gaullist freedom fighters had an especially tough time because they were mistrusted and disliked by their own countrymen. De Gaulle's big break finally came in the summer of 1942, when the Germans began conscripting Frenchmen to

work the munitions factories in the Fatherland. Young Frenchmen literally took to the hills and the resistance grew hugely. Who hasn't heard of the Maquis?

Greece: If your characters are working for the OSS or the SOE and you want them to be completely unsupported, (perhaps even gunned down by friendly fire) why not send them to Greece? Nowhere else in Europe were there as many resistance groups at each other's throats. The National Union was backed by the Greek Monarchy. The EDES and EKKA were backed by the Greek pro-republicans and the ELAS was backed by the Communists.

Of all of these, the Communist ELAS was the most effective but infinitely more effective sabotage operations were performed by SOE agents operating on their own.

The Netherlands: Home of the Order Service. This group fought hard early on in the war, but met with disaster quickly. On March 6, 1942, the Gestapo arrested an SOE radio operator with his transmitter. For eighteen months the Gestapo used this man to misinform and translate the communication of the Dutch resistance. The Germans called this disinformation campaign *Englandspiel* (England Game,) and it was the most successful penetration of a resistance group ever performed by the Nazis.

Norway: Since 1942, Hitler was convinced that the Allies were going to try and invade Norway. To Hitler, this would be very bad, largely because Tripitz was a major harbor for his capital ships, and the hydro-electric plant at Vermok was one on the few facilities he had that could produce heavy water (essential in the manufacture of atomic weapons.) Considering these factors, it's no wonder that Norway was just slightly more crowded than the Bronx. It was knee-deep in bad guys!

The Norwegians stayed pretty quiet resistance-wise, but when they came out to play, they played to win. The Milorg resistance group was noted for its extensive network of radio spies and its very effective guerrilla strikes. On February 28, 1943, they performed a successful raid on the Vermok dam, where a full-scale British attempt had failed the previous November.

Poland: Despite their severe handicap during the Blitzkrieg in 1939, the Polish resistance was moderately effective. The Polish Home Army sprouted up before the dead of their army regulars were cold. Their primary operations were bold guerrilla warfare and mechanical sabotage. After the fall of France, Sikorsky ordered the PHA to suspend active operations, due to brutal retaliation by the Nazis against the civilian population. Afterwards, the SOE did their part and sent in aid and advisors. The Home Army then gathered its strength and operated under Allied command.

Yugoslavia: In *Force 10 From Navarone*, we see Harrison Ford making it up as he goes and never asking the odds as he tries to eliminate a very uncooperative Yugoslavian bridge. He does so with the help and hindrance of the Yugoslavian resistance.

Fig. 1: Gauleiter

Yugoslavian resistance quickly polarized under two leaders. Colonel Drava Mihailovic headed up the Cetniks, while Josip Broz — codename "Tito" (whose group had no formal name) — headed a powerful, Communist-backed resistance front of his own. The two refused to operate together.

While Tito was backed and commanded by the Russians, the Cetniks received aid and orders from the SOE. Unfortunately, as the war progressed, the Cetniks became more concerned by the possibility of Russian occupation. Gradually, more and more Cetniks turned into German sympathizers. Even more unfortunate was the fact that SOE and OSS agents seldom found this out until they were facing down German guns.

New Beginning: Even in the heart of the Fatherland the Nazis found resistance. New Beginning, was a loosely organized, anti-Nazi propaganda group. By night, they would compile and print anti-Hitler tracts and papers. The content of these was designed to create dissent within the Nazi ranks.

The Schwingheim: "*Schwingheim*" was the derogatory term used by the Hitler Youth to address the Swing Kids. German Swing Kids were a mostly peaceful movement of German youth that directly opposed the HJ (Hitler Youth.) They were roughly equivalent to the "Hippies" of 1960s America. Their hair was too long and their mode of dress was definitely not "in line" with Hitler's vision of the ideal Aryan. Swing Kids were obsessed with American cinema and music.

After hours, in cafes and restaurants, the Swing Kids would gather to listen to the swinging big band sounds of America. To the blasting melodies of Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller and a dozen other big band legends, the angry youth of the Reich would dance. In this manner, Germany did the Jitterbug, the Foxtrot, the Big Apple and other dances — in peaceful protest to the hated Nazis.

American movies were also shown to Swing Kids by Swing Kids, but films like *Gone With the Wind*, *Casablanca* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* enjoyed less success because they were harder to obtain and conceal.

Swing music was considered subversive by the Nazis. They referred to it as "Negro Music" or "Jew Music" (but not by such nice words, if you know what I mean.) Selling subversive records soon became a criminal offense. Just listening to swing or watching American movies could get you sent to a concentration camp for the greater good of the Reich.

At night, the Swing Kids would gather in clubs where the owner or proprietor was sympathetic to their cause. They would push the tables and chairs aside and dance. Typically, the Schwingheim would post a sentry, concealed near the club, to watch for SS or Hitler Youth squads. On this sentry's warning, the band would switch mid-beat from Goodman to Strauss and the club's furnishings would magically teleport back to their places. So lived the Swing Kids. A Swing Kids scenario can be extremely entertaining for players and GMs alike. See the movie.

To introduce Swing Kids to your adventure you have to do it right. Have recordings of the following artists' greatest hits loaded in the CD player:

Benny Goodman
Tommy Dorsey
Artie Shaw
Bob Crosby
Glenn Miller
Count Basie
Duke Ellington
Harry James
Jimmie Lunceford
The *Swing Kids* Motion Picture Soundtrack

Soldiers of the Reich

The organization of the Nazi regime was extensive and we could never cover it all here. However, some of the different types of scumballs and their statistics must be noted. The Nazis were not only a military group — far from it. Most of the actual Nazis were not even linked to the armed forces, and many of the German army and Air Force were not party members. Here is a breakdown of the civilian and military Nazis:

The Gauleiter - Or Regional Leader. The Gau, or region, roughly corresponded to the old German electoral districts. Each Gauleiter was responsible for Nazi activities, industry and civilian militia in his region. The Gauleiter (see figure 1) was the highest ranking "civilian" of the Nazi Party and was appointed to his post by the Führer himself. Most times, the Gauleiters would go unarmed, but if they did carry a weapon it was usually the P-08 Luger or the Browning High Power automatic (detailed later). Normally the Gauleiter traveled in the company of a team of SS or SA bodyguards.

The Kreisleiter - The Kreisleiter, or "Circle Leader" (figure 2) was the lowest paid full-time party official. Each Kreisleiter was nominated to his post by Hitler on his Gauleiter's recommendation and directly answerable to his Gauleiter. This was an unusual post because it carried no formal authority of its own; the Kreisleiters were mostly errand boys of the Gauleiter, carrying out their orders and making sure their Gauleiters' policies were implemented. Armaments were seldom carried by these officials, although their SA cronies were usually prepared for anything.

The Ortsgruppenleiter, or local group leader, was appointed to his post by the Gauleiter on recommendation of the Kreisleiter. His control extended over a Local Group of approximately 40,000 people in a town or small district. He had his own office and exerted direct control over about 3,000 party members.

The Blockleiters - Nazi officials of the lowest rank. Their control extended over usually 40–60 households. Citizens were encouraged to consult them in the event of problems instead of going to the Ortsgruppenleiter. The Blockleiters were the most corrupt Nazi officials and frequently skimmed from the collections for Winter Aid and other campaigns. They also used their influence in the party to buffalo citizens for goods or sexual favors, or just for fun. Usually, the Blockleiter went unarmed, but again, had the local SA at his command if he needed them.

The SA - The paramilitary strong-arms of the Reich. By day, they held down regular civilian jobs, but were also called to service when the Party requested it. For the most part, the SA were street thugs in uniform. They were sanctioned to carry weapons in public while in the service of the Reich and regularly abused their status as almost-soldiers to bully the civilians.

Seen in figure four is an SA soldier carrying a standard 7.92 mm Gewehr 41 rifle. SA officers carried a Walther P-38, P-08 Luger or a 9mm Browning High-Power automatic. If they were not carrying firearms, they would pack billy-clubs or daggers. In comparison to the SS or Wehrmacht, the SA was only moderately trained for combat and make easy prey for your PCs spoiling for a fight in the name of freedom.

The Gestapo - the State Secret police, headed by Reichsprotector Heydrich Reinhard. Plainclothes officers of the Gestapo kept their party badges concealed and their ears open, listening for any subversive talk among the people. Additionally, each

Fig. 2: Kreisleiter

Gestapo official maintained an extensive network of Hitler Youth and civilian spies. When a Gestapo officer wanted to make an arrest, he would rally the local SS for muscle. They would then take the suspects forcibly from their homes, usually from their beds or from the dinner table. More often than not, suspects were "shot while trying to escape." For this reason the German people jumped and held their breath at each knock on the door of their homes.

Gestapo members usually carried a sidearm concealed on their person. The weapon of choice was the P-08 Luger, although the more trigger-happy Gestapo officers preferred the Browning 9mm for its extended ammo capacity. Gestapo offices were usually located in the same building as the offices of the Gauleiter or Kreisleiter.

The SS - The elite fighting force of the Reich. They were segregated into two departments, the SS and the Waffen-SS. Of the two, your players will likely have more interaction with the regular SS. The Waffen-SS served as the elite infantry, armored or Luftwaffe unit.

SS units are the ones your players should be watching out for. They were much tougher, better trained and more disciplined than the SA or the Wehrmacht regulars. They are most easily recognized by the SS double-lightning insignia on the right side of their collar.

For sidearms, the SS preferred the Luger P-08 or the 9mm Browning High Power. However, they felt no guilt in packing the heavier guns, such as the MP-40 SMG. Also, some SS officers carried a converted form of a Wehrmacht signal flare pistol. This pistol could fire regular flares or could launch a specially designed, 5 oz. high explosive grenade — a nasty surprise for resistance fighters not expecting heavy firepower ("Kills traitors dead!")

Weapons of the Reich

As civilians or resistance fighters, your characters should (hopefully) not have to confront the entire Wehrmacht. Small arms should be the order of battle. Here are the common small arms of the Nazis:

The Browning High Power: Chambered in 9mm, this pistol was common among the SS and the Gestapo. It loads from the bottom with a 13-round box magazine and weighs 1.01 kg. Manufactured in Belgium.

The Luger P-08: Another popular 9mm pistol using an 8-round box magazine. Weight: 1kg. Prone to jamming in inclement weather conditions.

The Walther P-38: Very similar to the Luger P-08 but can use German or British manufactured rounds interchangeably. Magazine: 8 rounds. Weight: 1.25 kg.

The Gewehr 41 Infantry Rifle: This 7.92 mm standard infantry firearm was tough and reliable. It used a five round box magazine, each round being chambered by the bolt-action method. A typical infantry soldier carried six such magazines.

Fig. 3: SA Grunt

The MP-40: This is the standard Nazi weapon of the cinema. Weighing in at 9 pounds and housing a 32 round ammo capacity, this SMG fires a scorching 500 rounds per minute! Equipped standard with a folding metal stock, it proved to be one of the finer automatic weapons of W.W. II. The standard rear sight is accurate out to 100 yards, but the optional folding rear sight extends practical kill range to 200 yards. This weapon is chambered in 9mm. SS troopers typically carried 6 magazines for this weapon.

The MG-34: Your players better hope they never end up on the wrong end of one of these. The MG-34 was one of the finest heavy MGs of the War. It can be loaded with a 71 round drum of 7.92mm rifle ammo, or it can be set up for belt feed. The weapon only weighs 24 pounds and so can be fired while running. Normally mounted on a bipod or tripod. You might see one of these in a concentration camp watch tower.

The Kampfpistole: Converted signal pistol/grenade launcher. Fires a flare or a 5 oz. high explosive grenade to a range of 100 yards. Breech loaded, this pistol also comes in a double-barrel model. The grenades for this weapon are impact-activated and nose-fused, so be careful!

Name-Dropping in the Reich

For the best flavor, a GM needs to know as much as he can about the setting in which his group is playing. When the players take an unforseen turn or the plot twists unexpectedly, names become a problem. In an American setting, the local phone book is an invaluable aid for grabbing a quick name. In occupied Europe, however, Herr Smith and Herr Jones are seldom found heading up the Gestapo or the SS. For this reason we have included the following list, containing the names of many of the European heads of state during the war:

Alsace-Lorraine: Gauleiter Buerckel

Belgium: Military Governor Von Falkenhausen

Protectorate of Bohemia & Moravia (Modern Czech Republic): Reichsprotector Heydrich/Daleuge

Denmark: German Plenipotentiality Best

East Prussia: Gauleiter Forster

Occupied France: Military Governor Von Steulphagel

Vichy France: Marshal Petain

Holland: Governor Seyss-Inquart

Norway: Reichskomissar Terboven

Ostland (Baltic States and nearby Russian territory): Reichskomissar Lohse

Poland: Governor Frank

Ukraine: Reichskomissar Koch

Wholesale Murder Warehouse

Nazi directives officially referred to the extermination of the Jews as "Special Treatment." Such euphemisms are common in a state where the reigning authorities are doing something they know is evil. Call it what you will, the Nazi concentration camp/extermination camp program remains the single largest atrocity of the W.W. II era. Everyone who saw *Schindler's List* and *The Holocaust* watched them somberly. Throughout the show, our minds ticked silently away, assessing the tactical situation presented in the film. If we were there, what could we do to help break the Nazi death grip? Breaking a concentration camp, and liberating the people therein, is something all of us have wanted to do.

The extermination process went something like this: First, Jews and other enemies of the Reich were identified. In the case of German subjects, Jews were required to register their nationality with government officials. Lists were compiled and the names on those lists rounded up. In the case of newly occupied territories, such as Poland and the Sudetenland, Jews were herded in droves to long lines of Nazi officials — list makers.

Once these lists were compiled the Jews were ordered to report to a staging area where they would be rounded up into ghetto housing. As many as five families would share a single bedroom. Sanitation was atrocious and no medical care was provided. Food was scarce and the Jews of the ghettos were forced to rely on black market trading to sustain themselves. Anything they did not actually carry with them into the ghetto became property of the Nazis.

The next step was the most feared. The list makers would come once more and those they called were ordered to report to staging areas or railway stations with a maximum of 50 kilos of luggage. From there, the Jews were loaded into cattle or freight cars and shipped to the camps. Their luggage went its own way. In some cases entire ghettos were "liquidated." Squads of Wehrmacht and SS would storm in and kill anyone that did not move quickly to the rail yard or staging area. They would then loot the ghetto for valuables. Watch *Schindler's List* for an example.

There were two types of concentration camps: the Work Camp and the Death Camp. Work Camps used their prisoners as slave labor to manufacture textiles, metal goods or munitions for Hitler's war machine. Typhus, starvation, beatings and indiscriminate shootings claimed lives by the thousands. The dead were buried in mass graves outside the camps, or simply dumped into the local landfill. As the work camps filled, the sick and the weak were loaded on trains and shipped off for "Special Treatment" to such places as Auschwitz or Sobibor.

When the condemned arrived at the death camps, they were stripped of their clothes and herded into mass "shower" facilities. Drums labeled "Zyklon B"(an industrial disinfectant) were poured into vats of water and then heated to produce the gas Hydrogen Cyanide. The mouths of the corpses were then stripped of any valuable dental work and the bodies burned in mass incinerators. The stench of the burning flesh and the resultant rain of human ash could be smelled and seen from miles away.

Many parts of the condemned bodies were utilized by the Nazis. Women's hair was made into wigs for the wives of party members and the skin of infant children was fashioned into gloves or lamp shades. Sadistic medical experiments were also performed. Experiments in pain, sterilization, altitude, exposure, inoculation with deadly bacteria and vivisection occurred regularly.

Jews were not the only victims of Special Treatment. The camp at Dachau was the first to open (March 20, 1933) and was initially filled with everyone but the Jews. Political enemies of the Reich, freedom fighters, common criminals, sex offenders and the insane also had their place in the Camps. Often times, the toughest of the criminals would claim the lives of weaker prisoners. In time, such criminals were sanctioned by the camp commandants to act as "in house" wardens.

From a gaming standpoint, the easiest time to hit the Nazis at the death camp level would be when the prisoners were being moved by train, but this may not be feasible. Map your concentration camp out in great detail — every little hiding spot or terrain advantage can be used to your players' advantage. Here is a list of facilities that every concentration camp had....

Work Camps:

1) Garrison for the Wehrmacht and SS troops stationed at the camp. This will include barracks, kitchen and latrine facilities, a recreation hall, a motorpool and an armory, as well as storage warehouses for food and soft goods.

2) Officers Barracks: Private or semi-private housing for SS and Wehrmacht officers. A private kitchen and dining area is also customary.

3) Commandant's quarters: By far the nicest accommodations on the site. Usually a converted house or villa.

4) Coal and fuel depot.

5) Infirmary with medical staff — for the soldiers, not the inmates.

6) Enclosed manufacturing facilities, for whatever the slaves of the camp are producing. These facilities are usually separated from the inmate barracks by fences.

7) Materials Warehousing: Holding material to support the manufacturing. Includes loading docks for incoming shipments.

8) Inmate Barracks: Squalid, high-density bunking, usually wooden bunks four high and two deep. Doors are usually locked from the outside at night and not opened until morning under any circumstances.

9) Inmate Latrines: Large community outhouses that never get cleaned.

10) Inmate Kitchen Facilities (no dining room): Prisoners were fed by walking by a window and accepting whatever was given to them. Often this was the garbage from the garrison outside the enclosure.

11) Fences and Watchtowers: Eight-foot fences topped in barbed wire, sometimes electrified. Watchtowers were typically equipped with two Wehrmacht guards, a searchlight, a klaxon and a heavy machine gun.

12) Staging Area: Camps were usually constructed around a large open area in the center of the enclosure. This area was for assembly of the prisoners, for inspection, and for sorting for Special Treatment.

13) Mass Grave and Landfill: These two items can be combined. Landfills and mass graves were located outside the enclosure.

This was the basic rundown of a work camp. For a death camp you need only add a set of train tracks and mass execution and cremation facilities. Then replace the manufacturing facilities with buildings where the bodies may be sifted through for valuables. Security was much tighter and the fences were always electrified in the death camps.

Closing Notes

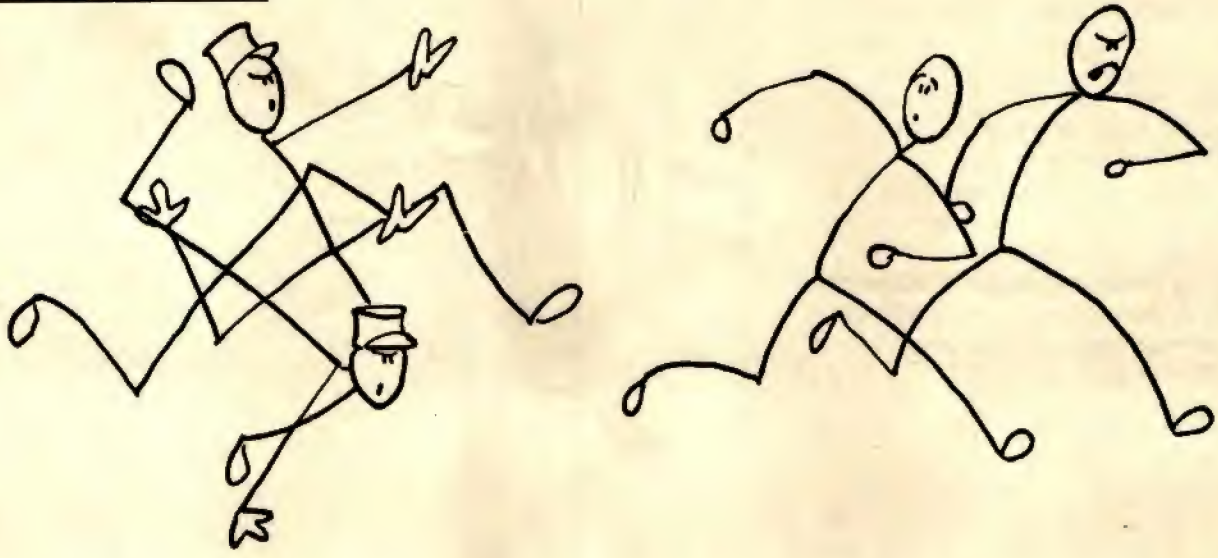
There are simply bales of reference material in existence about the Nazis, but few of us have the time and energy to slog down to the public library and sort through the stacks. The movies provide a terrific means for us to assimilate information in a much more entertaining fashion. I would suggest you watch at least the following films: *Schindler's List*, *Swing Kids*, *Casablanca*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

As a demographic group, gamers are the best people in the world at simulating conflicts and extrapolating the outcome of those conflicts. What Adolf Hitler did in 1933 may seem remarkable on the surface, but even Hitler admitted that he himself was astonished at how easy it was. Telling people what they wanted to hear, giving them a scapegoat for their problems, and then holding them in fear, is not so hard as we might imagine. For this reason we must never forget the Nazis. As long as we remember, and can use our unique foresight to avert similar circumstances in the future, Hitler's hell on earth will never happen again.

Special thanks to Matt August of the Denver Gamers' Association for sharing his vast trove of knowledge and making this possible.

This article is dedicated to the millions of people who gave their lives in defense of compassion, liberty and reason — against Adolf Hitler. We salute you. ❑

Stick Figure Theatre!
by
Chris Avellone



"Don't ask me how they do it — just run!"

From Intense to Inept

Two Dozen New Advantages and Disadvantages for GURPS

By Spike Y. Jones © 1995 ❖ Artwork by Pete Garcia © 1995

The following selection of new GURPS advantages and disadvantages came to me while I was writing **Mixed Doubles,** a supplement for **GURPS Supers,** and most of them are especially applicable to characters in a modern or post-modern campaign. Still, many can also suit characters in other GURPS genres - from Cyberpunk to Ice Age and everything in between.

Advantages

Acute Touch: 1 point/level

You get a bonus on any Touch roll, i.e. any attempt to do something in which tactile sensation or very fine manipulation is necessary. Examples include reading braille, finding or identifying objects in the dark, or performing open-heart surgery.

Acute Touch does not grant you superpowers; while it could be used to detect the impressions a pen made on the age of a notepad beneath the one a message was written on, it could not be used to read a newspaper with your fingertips (for that, see the Sensitive Touch super advantage in GURPS Supers./) Cost: 2 points for every +1 bonus to your roll.

Unremarkable Appearance: 10 points

While most people in the world are of only average appearance, your appearance goes beyond mediocre; it is so bland that you can be forgotten by a person within minutes. Someone attempting to remember you from a previous encounter, trying to penetrate a disguise you are wearing, or checking to see if he is being shadowed by you will have a -2 penalty to his rolls.

While this would be inconvenient for someone who tried to make a living from his recognizability (such as an actor or rock star, for whom this would be a -10 point disadvantage), it is unlikely that an Unre-

markable person would devote much time to such an unrewarding endeavor. On the other hand, someone who could make a career out of not being memorable (such as a secret agent, a thief or a con-man) would consider this a valuable advantage.

Artistic Ability: 1 point/level

You have natural talent in any or all creative fields. When learning any artistic skill, you learn as if your IQ or DX were actually (IQ + Artistic Ability or DX + Artistic Ability).

This ability doesn't carry over to the performing field though, so, while the bonus would be applied to Writing skill when it came to writing music or poetry, it would not apply to performing skills such as Singing or Musical Instrument. In the case of the Bard skill, the bonus is halved, since that skill includes both creative and performing aspects. Cost: 1 point for each +1 bonus.

Fast Learner: 5 points/level

You are an avid learner; no matter what the subject is, if you set your mind to it, you can master it (or improve an existing one) in a fraction of the time it would take someone else. For every level you have of this advantage, the normal 200 hour time to learn a new skill through study (see GURPS Basic Set, p. 82) is halved, to a minimum of 12.5 hours per character point for Fast Learner +4. Cost: 5 points for each level, up to a maximum of 4 levels.

General Education: 5 points/ level

While there are a number of skills you specialized in during your education, you also learned a lot of secondary and peripheral information. You receive a bonus equal to your level of General Education on the skill rolls for any academic subject which you have not spent any points on.

Typical subjects taught in schools include various artistic, athletic, language, professional and scientific skills, but rarely (if ever) combat, thief or other non-academic related skills; it is up to the GM to determine exactly which skills would or would not be taught at some specific type of school.

Each level of General Education represents a level of schooling in your society; in a modern American setting, +1 would represent completion of elementary school, +2 would be high school, +3 would be an undergraduate program, and +4 and above would represent terms of post-graduate study. Cost: 5 points for each +1 bonus to defaults.

Immunity From Prosecution: 5 points/ 5 points

Because of some special status you enjoy (e.g. a foreign diplomat, a special government agent, the recipient of a presidential pardon, or having "gone state's witness"), you are free from prosecution for criminal activities in the jurisdiction you most often operate in.

This protected status does not confer Legal Enforcement Powers (they must be purchased separately), nor does it ensure that you can't be prosecuted in other jurisdictions for crimes committed abroad (i.e. extradition treaties between countries would still be enforceable in your case), but it does give you considerable freedom of action as an adventurer. It must also be noted that persons with Immunity From Prosecution are always kept track of by those agencies which granted them this status, and often by other legal authorities as well. Cost: 5 points for limited immunity or 15 points for total legal immunity.

Information Access: 5, 10, 15, or 20 points

Because of your job, status or background, you have personal access to some specific class of valuable information unavailable to the average person using the Research skill. This advantage is similar to the Contacts advantage (found in a number of GURPS sourcebooks, including Supers, Martial Arts and Cyberpunk), with the biggest difference being that *you* are the contact, not some other person.

The cost of this advantage is determined by how much information you are privy to, how important this information is and how easily you can get hold of it. For the type of Information Access you have (business, police, criminal, scientific, etc.), you are assigned an effective skill level when it comes to searching for a specific fact.

Limited access - enjoyed by beat cops, street thugs, non-executive company employees, etc. - is normally worth 3 points, and gives an effective skill of 12. Above-average Information Access - enjoyed by detectives, minor criminals with organized crime connections or junior-level executives - costs 5 points and gives an effective skill of 15. The greater access a department head or senior executive has costs 8 points and gives an effective skill of 18. And free access to information - held by police chiefs, "inner circle" Mafiosos or company presidents - is worth 10 points and results in an effective skill level of 21.

It is important to note that you don't necessarily have to have an Information Access level commensurate with your position in an organization. If you have a corporate position but don't have this advantage, then it is likely that you are shut out from important or sensitive information (either because you aren't trusted or because it was not deemed important that you know certain things.) Conversely, you can have a level of Information Access that is higher than your actual status, which would represent some personal means of access denied to others of your rank (such as favors owed by superiors or some secret knowledge about security codes.)

Because you are your own contact with this advantage, you don't have to worry about the reliability of your informant. Nor will "cash incentives" be necessary in order to exercise your skill. Moreover, you can make use of your abilities as often as you desire, unless you have a higher Information Access than your station would ordinarily entitle you to, in which case you run the risk (depending on the situation) of raising suspicion.

Psi Cipher: 25 points

You have a specialized psionic talent that renders you invisible to any method of psionic detection, and invulnerable to any form of psionic attack that requires the attacker to make contact with your mind; even to the probing of a friendly psi, your mind is a cipher. Unfortunately, you are also unable to use any psionic abilities, including marginal psi such as the Empathy and Danger Sense advantages. Because you have no active powers to use, you cannot leave a psionic signature to be detected by Psi Sense.

Legend of the Five Rings Personality Card Standard Features

Players in Legend of the Five Rings must recruit Personalities to carry their battles to the enemy.

1 Each Personality has a Chi Ability, allowing them to focus their inner strength in single combat or to summon magical energies.

2 Each Personality also has an Attack/Defense value that determines how powerful the Personality is in mass combat.

3 Personalities have their own Honor. Gaining Honorable allies increases the Honor of the Player.

4 Before a Player can recruit a Personality, the Player may be required to have a minimum amount of Honor.

5 All Personalities require a tithe in Gold from the Player's fief before they will swear fealty.

The Legend Begins September 1995....

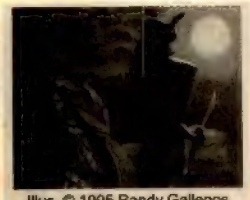
Legend of the Five Rings™ is more than just a collectable card game. It is a sweeping story of war, of honor gained and honor lost, of pacts with dark forces and of Redemption. L5R™ is a unique vision of an Empire in chaos and the mighty warriors and wizards who hold the key to its future.

Illus. © 1995 Randy Elliot

Over the next two years, the Legend will grow into a Saga as the story is extended and expanded by four Expansion Sets to the basic game, finally culminating in a Conclusion Set.

Legend of the Five Rings™ Basic Game ..... September 1995
Shadowlands™ Expansion Set..... March 1996
Forbidden Knowledge™ Expansion Set..... July 1996
Anvil of Despair™ Expansion Set..... September 1996
Crimson and Jade™ Expansion Set ..... March 1997
Time of the Void™ Conclusion Set ..... August 1997

The Saga begins with the fall of the Hantei Dynasty, and the resulting chaotic battles for the Emerald Throne of the Empire. As the Saga continues, the evil forces lurking at the edges of the Empire will accumulate power and allies, until at last they are able to summon their Dark Master from his extradimensional prison. The best efforts of the Clans of the Empire to overcome this menace only serve to strengthen his power. As the Empire crumbles, one Clan will be Redeemed by an ancestral spirit, one Clan will fall from grace. In the end alliance formed during the Saga will be put to the test with the fate of the Empire hanging in the balance.


Illus. © 1995 Randy Gallegos

Legend of the Five Rings will be released this September. The first print run will be presold, so be sure to place your orders early. L5R will feature 300+ cards, each with unique artwork created by more than 50 of the industry's hottest artists, including:

Illus. © 1995 Susan Van Camp

Ken Meyer Jr, Brian Snöddy, Douglas Shuler, Randy Elliot, Richard Kane-Fergusen, Scott Swamer, Pamela Shanteau, William O'Connor, Ron Spencer, April Lee, Daniel Gelon, Susan Van Camp, Mike Raabe, Mark Tedin, Quinton Hoover, Mark Poole, L.A. Williams, Eric Anderson, Robin Wood, Rob Alexander, David Bollt, KC Lancaster, Mike Kimble, Anson Maddocks, Randy Gallegos, Christopher Rush, Matt Bush, Stacy Drum, Sandra Everingham, Steve Morales, Bryon Wackwitz, Carl Frank, Brad McDevitt, David Trowbridge, Bonnie Hill, Christina Wald, Richard Emond, Cline Seigenthaler, Elym Sirac, Heather Bruton, Diana Vick, Stacy Fritz, Pete Garcia, Chris Maher, Bob Hobbs, Mark Maxwell, Jesper Myrfors, Kevin Ward, Nicola Leonard, John Snyder, and the Legend of the Five Rings Art Director, Matthew D. Wilson.

...The Legend Ends At GenCon in 1997!

Quick Adaptation: 15 points

This advantage is similar to Combat Reflexes, but has a broader range of applications (with fewer active or combat effects.) If you have this advantage, you are quick to adapt to changing situations. If you fall through a trap door, you regain your footing almost instantly. If you have a disorienting spell cast on you, its effects last only half normal duration. If surprised, you never "freeze" for more than one second, and so on.

None of the effects of this advantage are shared by those around you, nor does it give you bonuses on any rolls, including wound recovery rolls.

Tech Level Familiarity: 2 points/ Tech Level

Through the media, a varied lifestyle or other exposures to a wide range of machinery, you are familiar with the general principles behind the workings of most common machines in your society. While this doesn't have any effect on your operations of equipment that you are specifically trained in, your default skill levels receive a bonus of +2. Thus, if you had learned Driving (Car) 12, your default to Driving (Truck) would be 10 instead of the usual 8, and even if you had learned no actual Piloting skills, your Piloting (Glider) skill would default to IQ-4 instead of IQ-6.

You don't have to buy this advantage up to the limits of your society's Tech Level; for the average person in a modern setting, buying Tech Level 6 Familiarity (which covers cars, planes, and radios) would be more suitable than Tech Level 7 Familiarity (which would help with the piloting of space shuttles and the operation of nuclear generating stations). Cost: 2 points times the maximum Tech Level of Mechanical Familiarity.

Wealth - Variable Work Hours: Variable

The standard Wealth levels on p. 16 of the GURPS Basic Set assign a specific amount of money to a character, assuming that he works a specific number of hours. While you do earn one of those specified levels of Wealth, you don't work the same number of hours for your money as the average person would.

For the "positive" Wealth levels, halving the time you spend working on earning an income adds 5 points to the cost of that Wealth level, so that a Wealthy income earned in only 10 hours would cost 25 points (instead of 20), and an Average income earned in only 20 hours per week costs 5 points (instead of being free).

Conversely, doubling your work hours would subtract -5 points from the cost of the advantage. Halving or doubling your work ours a second time adds or subtracts another 5 points to or from the cost.

For the "negative" Wealth levels (Poor and Struggling; since Dead Broke people have no money and work no hours, this advantage doesn't apply to them), the same formula holds, but in reverse; working fewer hours reduces the value of the disadvantage (e.g. maintaining a Struggling income level with only 20 hours work per week would only be a -5 point disadvantage), while working more hours increases it (although working significantly more than 40 or 50 hours per week would leave you with little time for other pursuits.)

To earn an income without working any hours at all (such as from sound investments or Social Security,) the adjustment to the cost of any Wealth level is a straight +20 points.

Youthfulness: 5 points

While you are still subject to normal aging rolls (see GURPS Basic Set, p. 83) you will always look younger than your true age by 10 or more years. While in some situations this can be troublesome (such as when trying to prove you are legally allowed to drink), in others it can be quite beneficial, leading to a +1 bonus to Sex Appeal and other appropriate reaction rolls.

Disadvantages

Callousness: -10 points

You rarely notice how your actions affect the lives of others, and if you do notice, you don't care. You're not a sadist; you won't go out of your way to do harm to someone else. But on the other hand, you also won't expend any effort to prevent harm from coming their way. All that matters to you is your own selfish goals.

Most people react to a person they know to be callous at -2, with the exception of other callous, power-hungry or greedy people, who often admire these

qualities when they see them reflected in others.

This personality trait suits a burned-out cyberpunk, an obsessed superhero driving himself to capture a hated enemy, or a soldier who has been pushed beyond his limits by exhaustion and atrocities, among other character types. It's more suitable for an NPC than a player character, because it is the sort of behavior that can break up a party of adventurers. If a GM allows this disadvantage for PCs, it might be best if the disadvantage is bought as a temporary one (which the player has every intention of buying-off at the next opportunity.)

Camera Shy: -1, -5 or -10 points

For some reason you don't like having your picture taken, being interviewed or appearing on television. The point value depends on how intense your reaction is. If you only feel vaguely uneasy in front of a camera, the quirk is only worth -1 point. If you will leave a room because someone with a camcorder walks in, it's worth -5 points. And if you become violent around photographers, whether you're a movie star who's tired of the paparazzi who hound him or a primitive tribesman who is afraid that an explorer's snapshot will steal his soul, the disadvantage is worth -10 points.

Characters from campaigns that do not have any "normal" form of photography cannot take this disadvantage.

Destructomania: -5 points

Many people enjoy the vicarious violence of watching a building being demolished, a car being sledgehammered for charity, or a demolition derby, but you are absolutely fascinated with destruction. So much so, in fact, that you can't sit at home and watch it on television; you have to get up and destroy things with your own hands. As a supervillain, you're anything but subtle and would only perform crimes that would allow you to break down doors, smash open safes, or trash a police car in the process. Even as a normal citizen, if you pass a store window and see a convenient brick on the ground, you must make a Will roll to resist smashing the window.

Fastidiousness: -5 points

You hate getting dirt, blood, oil or other foreign matter on your clothes or body; even the thought of such messiness disgusts you. You will never take matters into your own hands if the result could require a trip to the dry cleaner's, and would much prefer to either avoid such situations or to delegate the dirty work to underlings or allies.

Depending on how conspicuous you are about your habits, some people may have a negative reaction to such "prissy" ways, but you can disguise your feelings with a number of excuses, as in the case of a superhero who claims to be much more effective at ranged attacks than in hand-to-hand combat, a detective who always wears gloves pretending that he prefers not to leave fingerprints in the wrong places, or a leader who must save himself for tougher opponents than a handful of muck-covered monsters.

Generosity: -10 points

No matter how rich or poor you are, you believe that there are people in the world who deserve your money more than you do. If you pass a beggar on the street or if a canvasser comes to your door asking you to pledge money to a worthy cause, you must make a Will roll in order to resist the urge to give. On a critical failure you donate more than just spare change; you give the asker money you had earmarked for some other purpose, such as your lunch money or the handful of gold coins you received for selling the family cow.

Mechanically Disinclined: -2 points/Tech Level

Machines of all sorts don't seem to work properly for you: the last time you tried to make a milkshake in the blender you shredded your tie, it took you until the middle of January to assemble the bike you bought your son for Christmas, and no matter how many times you read the instructions, you just couldn't stop the VCR from blinking 12:00:00. For that matter, it's sometimes a struggle to get the TV to work!

The more technologically advanced your society is, the more inconvenient it is to have machines hate you, so this disadvantage is worth -2 points per Tech Level of your locale (taking an average if the Tech Level of your home is mixed): a cave-

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man (TL 0) with this disadvantage would be able to lead a full cave-life without being able to knap his own flints (0 points), the average American living through the Industrial Revolution (TL 5) would still be able to find a job that didn't involve working in a machine-equipped factory (-10 points), but a space ranger who confuses the controls of is Personal force shield (TL 11) with his vacc suit's air conditioner at the wrong moment would have a difficult (and possibly short) life (-22 points).

Power-Hungry: -15 points

Nothing is more important to you than control over your life and the lives of others. Power-hungry people often amass large amounts of money, but they don't love the money itself as much as the level of control it allows them to exercise. Love, friendship, commerce and politics are just different ways to gain power over others, and a power-monger is often quite willing to do favors for friends if it means that they will then "owe him one."

If offered a promotion or if given an opportunity to order others around (whether as a supervisor, team leader, military officer or elected official), a power-hungry person must make a Will roll (modified by how great the elevation in effective control would be; -1 per difference in Status levels or Rank) in order to resist the offer, even if he knows that he would not be the best man for the job. Conversely, if threatened with a reduction in power, the power-monger would have to make a Will roll (again negatively modified by the potential drop in Rank) in order to resist making protests or starting a fight.

Restricted Access To Money: Variable

No matter how much money you have, if you can't get your hands on it when you really need to, its benefits are severely reduced. If you have this disadvantage, there are obstacles between you and your money. For instance, your hours of access may be limited (such as "regular banking hours only"); you may have to convince an NPC (a trustee controlling your inheritance until you're legally of age, a bank official who has temporarily frozen your assets, your spouse who holds the purse-strings or your stockbroker who'll try to convince you of the errors of selling-out at the wrong time) of the necessity of an early withdrawal; you may have to pay a penalty of some sort for it; or you may just refuse to apply for credit cards, have no checking account and don't want an ATM card, all because you know that you'd spend yourself broke if you had 24-hour access to your money.

The value of this disadvantage depends on the amount of money you have, and on how difficult it is for you to spend it on demand. If a character has above average Wealth, the percentages (based on the frequency of availability) listed below are subtracted from the point value of their advantage. If the PC suffers from Poverty, then the same percentages are added to the value of the disadvantage, making Poverty that much worse. If the PC has an Average wealth, the value of the disadvantage is -1, -5, -10 points respectively. And of course, a person with no income whatsoever (Dead Broke) cannot take this disadvantage.

Quite often (on a roll of 12 or less): -10% (round up)

Fairly often (on a roll of 9 or less): -30% (round up)

Rarely (on a roll of 6 or less): -50% (round up)

If an attempt to access money is unsuccessful, the PC must wait at least one day before he can try again.

Rival: Variable

A rival is similar to an enemy in many ways; his successes often comes at the PC's expense and the PC will often see him as an adversary. The more powerful he is and the more frequent his interferences in the PC's life, the more points he's worth as a disadvantage. The biggest difference between a rival and an enemy is that, in the eyes of an impartial observer, the rival and the PC are both on the same side: they are both superheroes, detectives, soldiers or adventurers with similar goals who work for the same country or on the same side of the law.

While some rivalries are acknowledged and amiable ones (as when two musketeers fight over the hand of the same lovely lady,) a rival doesn't have to know how the PC feels about him. He may treat the PC as a protegé who needs to be "shown the ropes" without realizing that the PC feels patronized by him, or may expect gratitude from the PC for having saved his life and reputation. In some ways, a powerful rival's role parallels that of an ally or patron, but both the GM and the player must role-play the rivalry in such a way as to ensure that the rivalry is a disadvantage, not an advantage.

A serious rival is at least as powerful as the PC and in many cases, he's more powerful. A rival built on the same number of points is worth -5 points, one who is slightly more powerful than the PC (built on 50% points more than the PC) is worth -10 points, and one who obviously out-classes the PC (up to twice the PC's power-level; above that, the rivalry looks ridiculous) is worth -15 points.

If a rival only appears infrequently in the PC's adventures (on a roll of 6 or less,) his value is halved, but if he is almost impossible to get rid of (showing up on a roll of 15 or less) his value is tripled. Frequencies in between are worth either double value (appearing on a 12 or less) or list value (on a 9 or less.)

It must be noted that killing a rival is not usually a useful way to end a rivalry. If the rival was law-abiding, the PC will have become a murderer (causing him to gain an equivalent amount in other disadvantages,) and there's always a chance that he wasn't quite killed and that he'll come back more powerful, popular or infuriatingly polite than ever.

Status - Legally Dead: Variable

A person's Status reflects his social and legal standing in a community. If his Status is high, he is generally well-known and has access to money and privileges. While he often has increased expenses and responsibilities, the benefits tend to outweigh the drawbacks. Even if a character is a member of the lower classes (negative Status), he is at least legally recognized by society, meaning that he has some rights and privileges (however few they may be.)

But if a person is declared legally dead - through a computer foul-up, the legal scheming of enemies or a case of mistaken identity - all of those rights, privileges and benefits disappear. He will no longer have access to his own bank accounts, his possessions will be parceled out to is inheritors, and any time his name is checked

against official records (whether kept in a computer or on parchment), he will be suspected of trying to defraud someone somehow.

This disadvantage grants a character a Status one level below the lowest Status accredited to living persons. Thus, in modern America, Legally Dead would be Status -3 (below Street Beggar, and worth -15 points,) but in a fantasy/medieval setting, it would be status -5 (below Slave, and worth -25 points.) The one exception to this rule is in a cyberpunk campaign where being Legally Dead is not a disadvantage; it's actually a 10-point advantage called Zeroed.

Undefined Disadvantages: Variable

This is a catch-all disadvantage with a point value decided entirely by the player creating his character. You have some number of disadvantages that you aren't aware of, but which the GM may spring on you at will. Of course, a GM is allowed to do a lot of things to a PC's situation without worrying about points (that's the nature of the game), but in this case he can actually interfere with the mind, body and life of the PC in some rather integral ways. He can assign the PC a number of delusions that seriously cloud his perceptions (and the way your GM gives you descriptions), he can decide that the PC has a negative reputation that he isn't aware of, or he can saddle him with a relentless but secretive enemy who is after the PC for something he didn't do (a case of mistaken identity.)

The primary reason to take this disadvantage is to gain the last few points you need to finance the attributes and abilities you have already decided that you must have. Most players will want to buy off this disadvantage eventually, and some GMs could require that these points be bought-off before any other improvements be made to the character (and a nasty GM might force you to "pay interest" on the points you were "loaned," charging you 150% of the cost of the disadvantage in order to buy it off.)

Underconfidence: -10 points

No matter how powerful, capable or well-suited to a task, you don't believe in your own abilities and constantly undervalue yourself. Any time you are faced with a difficult task (but one which there is still a good chance you'd be able to perform), you must make a roll against your IQ or else balk at the task. You can still be forced into it by circumstances or other people, but you won't go willingly and you will end up performing badly as a result (-1 on all skill rolls while unwilling), turning your underconfidence into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

People you meet for the first time are quite likely to take your statements at face-value and believe that you aren't capable of what you claim you can't do, but friends and long-time associates will know your true limits and may think less of you for what they see to be false modesty.

As with overconfidence, this trait requires role-playing in order to differentiate your actions from a normal level of caution, so play it up. ❑

Stick Figure Theatre!
by
Chris Avellone

"Well, it's either a sprain or a pulled muscle. The two-dimensionality makes it hard to tell."

Into the Sunset?

GAME MASTER'S WORKSHOP

Why Western RPGs don't work, and a setting that hopefully does

PLOT-WERKS

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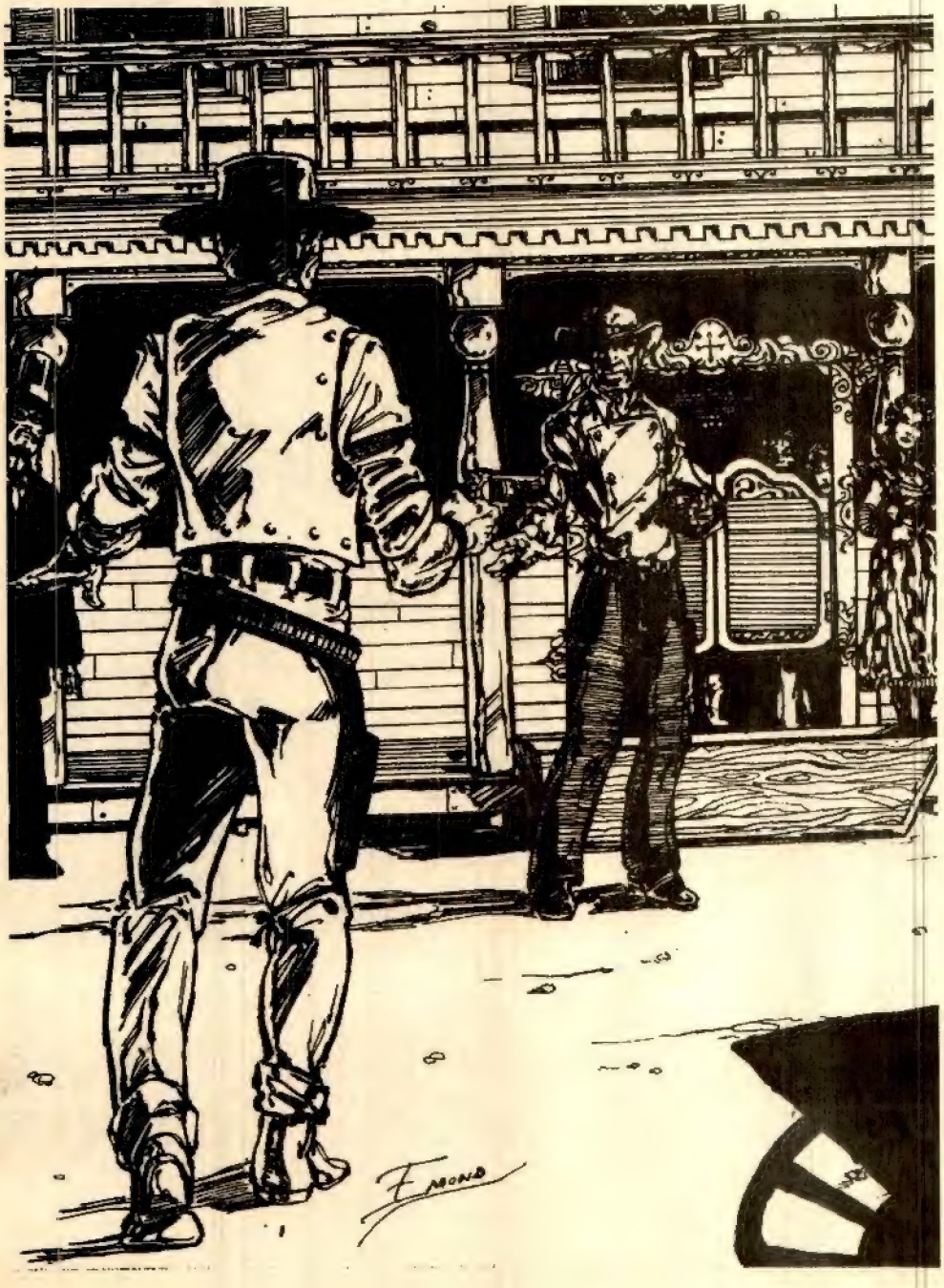

Of all the genres undertaken by RPGs, the western has run into more trouble than any other. While fantasy thrives under **Dungeons and Dragons**, and science fiction expands into countless different permutations, the western role-playing game has remained a constant invalid at death's door. Those few products which have come out under the banner of the Old West have died slow and ugly deaths, which has deterred designers from trying to revive it in any form.

The most perplexing fact about this phenomenon is how rich the western is in role-playing possibilities. From dime store novels to John Ford and Clint Eastwood to interactive video games, the Old West has been a vital part of our national culture for over a hundred years. We thrive on tales of the mysterious gunslinger and lonesome cowboy; John Wayne is as much a national icon as Washington or Lincoln. The settings and stereotypes are as diverse as they are familiar and the variety of western stories which can be told seems endless. Why, then, have role-playing games been so miserably unable to capitalize on it?

When looked at only casually, it seems that there is no answer. Something indefinable just hasn't clicked right; the proper mix of writing, art, a workable system and a receptive public hasn't come down the pike yet and until it does, we won't see a popular western RPG. There's nothing really wrong with the idea, it just hasn't happened yet. If we wait long enough, presumably one will come along.

The truth, however, is more complex than that. The genre presents several unique problems - problems that are not readily apparent - which confound most role-playing campaigns. While fantasy, sci-

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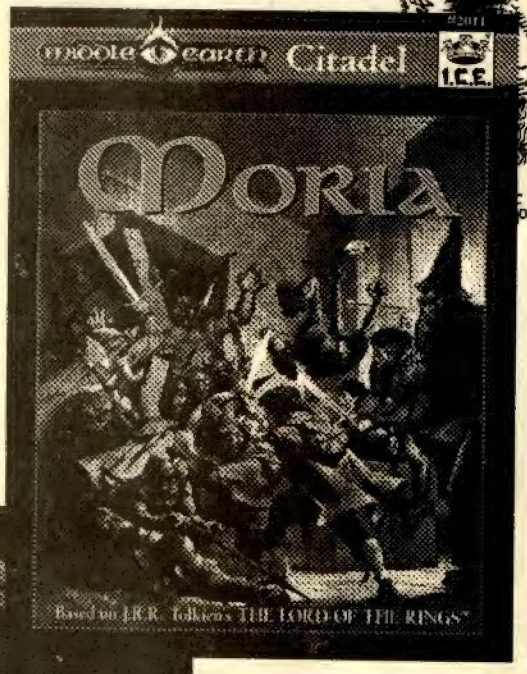

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ence fiction and even horror can overcome their respective difficulties with relative ease, the western is dependent upon certain factors that make role-playing all but impossible. So much so, in fact, that to lose those factors would be to destroy the very atmosphere the genre depends on. What are these problems, you may ask? Good question. Let's count them off, one by one.

1) "Do not forsake me, O my darling!" or order out of chaos

One of the central themes of the western genre is the taming of the wilderness, the bringing of civilization to the unmastered land. The frontier starts out as a lawless and wild place, full of bandits, bison and crabby Indians who've been kicked out of their homes. But through the perseverance of the heroes, the timely deaths of certain unsavory nasties, and the persistent application of good old-fashioned American hard work (cue patriotic music here,) civilization flourishes in the wilderness. Towns spring up, railroads develop, and an industrial nation rises from the plains.

The difficulty with this scenario from a role-playing perspective is that it's a one way trip. Where fantasy campaigns are timeless, and science fiction campaigns exist in a hypothetical projection of the future, the western is stuck in a relatively short time period of twenty to thirty years. And once you've carved a town out of the wilderness, it's stuck there. It doesn't leave. It just gets bigger and becomes a thriving metropolis. Eventually, there will no longer be any wilderness to civilize.

Whereas other campaigns can take a cyclical approach to their settings (there can always be another planet or another kingdom), the western is limited to this forward progression. And in so doing, it eliminates the atmosphere of the genre, destroying the theme of civilizing the wilderness. The heroic cowboy must ultimately be left behind as the frontier he depends on vanishes.

Which isn't to say this can't make a good story. On the contrary, some of the best western films ever made concern heroes who find themselves forced into obsolescence by the progress of society (*Butch & Sundance*, *The Wild Bunch* and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* for starters.) But you can't base a campaign on them. Anyone who's seen the movies can tell you their protagonists don't end up very well, and most players don't fancy their characters going out in a blaze of glory if they can help it. However much they may try, development will slowly edge out the wild frontier and characters will find themselves becoming obsolete and useless before the campaign has really settled down. Which makes for cranky players, abandoned campaigns and a game no one wants to buy.

2) Deadliness

Combat is an important part of any campaign (no matter how steeped in plot and character development it is,) but the western takes armed altercation to new heights. Gunfights and shoot-outs are common occurrences, desperadoes are plugged by the dozens and the clichéd showdown is the standard way to resolve any dispute on the frontier. Now, any munchkin worth his Hackmaster will tell you that RPGs tend to exult in loads of mindless carnage as well. But it's a different sort of mindless carnage and the two are not necessarily compatible.

Allow me to elaborate: very few "western" gunfights end in injury; chances are one party or the other is killed. This increases the chances of serious harm coming to characters dramatically, more than a "heroic" milieu like the western should have to tolerate. Pat Garrett didn't just wing Billy the Kid: he shot him DEAD, and high noon showdowns that end with a little casual scarring tend to lose their dramatic punch after a bit. Getting wounded in a gunfight more than two or three times stretches credibility to the breaking point and beyond. Whereas fantasy characters can take multiple sword blows with little damage and higher tech settings have handy med-packs or well-stocked hospitals available, the western lies in a no man's land where neither of those options exist. Which means that sooner or later, the characters' numbers will come up.

Arguably, you could increase their general hardiness to make them far tougher than the heavies they run into, thus insuring that they will remain around for awhile. This is roughly the equivalent of starting D&D characters at 14th level. If the players don't feel threatened by their adversaries, then the excitement vanishes from the campaign. The characters quickly become too cocky to get excited by the threat of the James gang turning them into Swiss cheese. What you eventually end up with is Monty Haul a lá Louis Lamour, which would make even the most jaded gamer wake up screaming every night.

3) Historical fact and the power of myth

The fact that the western springs from our fairly recent history leads many to attach historical facts to their games. They want time and place, historical figures and all of the attendant trappings and details thereof present and accounted for in their systems. But the appeal of the western runs far deeper than that, and while it adheres to the progressive historical pattern discussed above, its roots are much more universal. The western is mythic. It transcends time and place to occupy the same milieu as the Greek gods and Arthurian legends. The reason we still love the western is because it speaks to us in the here and now and reverberates in a fundamental core of our being (and stop laughing or I'll have Clint come over to your house and kick your ass). And it achieves it with a style and flavor that is uniquely American.

The paradox of creating a mythic universe within a very set historical time period is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve. The urge is err on the side of history and place the western campaign amid grounded historical facts, which all but eliminates any hope of establishing myth. America's relative youth as a national entity and the existence of a legitimate frontier as little as eighty years ago causes many to forget the timelessness of the genre and to cast such elements aside.

By plunking a campaign down into a specific time period, you lose the mythic quality that the western depends on. We all know when and where the Alamo took place, and even though it maintains a legendary status in our national consciousness, the "concrete placement" of history eliminates much of its larger-than-life status. All of our western heroes are larger than life, but if we place them alongside "mundane" historical events, then their mystique vanishes and with it goes one of the linchpins of the genre. This spells doom for any western campaign.

Arguably, one could add fantastic elements to the setting, giving it enough larg-

er than life status to compensate for the historical grounding. This has been done before, in Fox's recent *Brisco County* TV show, for example or Stephen King's extraordinary *Dark Tower* series. But purists would argue that endeavors like these stray too far into the realm of fantasy and gloss over the western elements with too much from other genres. The fantasy and science fiction aspects come to dominate the campaign, leaving the western as mere flavoring. For anyone wishing to keep their western free of hocus-pocus or high-tech gadgets, this "solution" is an unacceptable alternative.

4) The mysterious stranger.

This is a very specific stereotype, and it's not always needed to tell a western story, but its popularity causes more than a few problems for enterprising gamers. The modern western thrives on the image of the Man With No Name™, who rides into town, rids it of its problems and rides out again. No one knows where he comes from and his past is shrouded in mystery. He embodies the romance and wild unknowability of the western frontier, and helped established the identity of some of the genre's most recognizable stars (I won't name names, but he squints a lot...). In a role-playing environment, the mysterious stranger is a logical position for one of the PCs to occupy.

The problem is, if there's more than one PC, then the mystique is lost. The Man With No Name loses a lot of his cool when he flocks into town with a bunch of other folks, and the texture of the character vanishes. The GM can try to counter this by setting the character apart from the rest of the party, but this places undue attention on a single player at the expense of all the others. Presumably, the Man With No Name could be an NPC, but again, this moves the focus of the campaign away from the players to someone under the GM's control. No one likes being a sidekick.

If more than one person wants to play the stereotype, then you're in real trouble. In order to make everyone happy, a campaign gets set up where multiple mysterious strangers all mysteriously converge on the same mysterious place at the same mysterious time. Over and over again. Whatever coolness the concept had will be thoroughly beaten out within the first five minutes.

But there's even more to it than that. The whole appeal of the character exists in his impenetrable mystery, in the unknowability of his motives and methods. A player wishing to create a well-rounded character will have to fill in those mysteries in order to create a proper motive and point of view. In so doing, the impenetrability of the character is destroyed, as is his appeal. Whether the player chooses to reveal his motives to the other players is not the issue; *he* knows, and that's all that matters. He could choose not to fill in certain aspects of his past, but that would simply create an incomplete character, a flat and two dimensional stereotype that will quickly grow boring. Clint may be able to do The Man With No Name flawlessly, but role-players shouldn't try it unless they want to create an undue amount of havoc.

❖ ❖ ❖

Few, if any, of these problems are easy to pinpoint at first glance. Initially, a western campaign may have a great deal of appeal and gamers may enter into it without realizing the pitfalls that await. But await they do (cue evil sinister music here). They sit there like land mines, hiding beneath the surface until things have progressed to a certain point, then blowing up in everyone's face. They are the secret core of the western genre, and we can never have a viable Old West RPG until they are carefully and delicately resolved.

So is there any hope? Can the John Wayne fan in all of us ever find sustenance in an RPG, or are we doomed to pore over our horrifically outdated copies of Boot Hill for the rest of our miserable lives? Fortunately, we need not despair quite yet. The difficulties presented by the western are substantial, but not insurmountable. With careful planning by the GM and an adherence to a particular style and flavor of western, it is possible to create a viable campaign setting.

Of all the "sub-genres" of the western, the one which most easily skirts the problems discussed above is the revisionist "spaghetti western" made popular by the films of Italian director Sergio Leone. Until the 1960s, most mainstream westerns had focused on white hat/black hat morality tales and the aforementioned "civilization out of the wilderness" theme. Leone changed all that with movies like *A Fistful of Dollars* and *Once Upon a Time in the West*. Their settings were inspecific and timeless, their characters were larger than life, and the old school "good vs. evil" plays were tossed out in favor of dark, gritty conflicts between ruthless men willing to kill to make their points. They deconstructed all of the stereotypes that had come before them and took the western into heretofore unknown directions. In so doing, they have provided role-players with the best opportunities to participate in a decent western campaign. How exactly? Read on.

The problems arising from historical fact and the linear progression of frontier development are eliminated by Leone. His films are set in unspecified locales during periods of time which remain frozen forever. They are free from the fetters of history, and therefore have the ability to strike those universal chords that mythology thrives on. One need never worry about becoming obsolete in a Leone western, because the industrial revolution is on permanent hold. Change and growth are not progressive; they are just part of a long, continuous cycle. In the high rocky bluffs and small desert towns of these films, civilization is unknown, and the shady men who live there have no fear of becoming obsolete.

Granted, there are historical elements in Leone's films: *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly* is set during the Civil War and *Once Upon a Time in the West* deals with the creation of a town from practically nothing. But these elements are connected to the mythic qualities of the story in ways that heighten and augment them; the history is incorporated into the myth. The Civil War of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* is never-ending, swinging back and forth across the western plains (?!) without rhyme or reason. The lack of historical figures and "actual" battle sites enhance this impression; only the colors of the uniforms tell you what war this is. The developing town of *Once Upon a Time in the West* is similar; it is a pawn to be pushed about by greedy men, its value is strictly a material one and it holds no promise of order and civilization as other towns do.

As for the inevitable gunplay, its role is actually less important in Leone's films

than in previous westerns. Certainly, the main characters have higher body counts than most moderate land wars, but most of the deaths they inflict onscreen are against the flunkies, toadies and thugs of their adversaries. Against the orcs. The true gunslingers - the central protagonists and antagonists of the story - don't go up against each other on Main Street at high noon; they don't even go up against each other in some side alley at 2 a.m. In fact, we are never sure whether they'll go up against each other at all.

Often, we have no idea which sides the combatants will end up on, and their allegiances may change from scene to scene. While the white hats and black hats of classic westerns have nothing to say to each other, the ambiguous gunslingers of spaghetti westerns are not locked into roles as moral opposites. This facilitates more subtle methods of interaction, such as verbal manipulation, political jockeying and appeals to self-interest. In other words, *role-playing*. Gunfights between the principals are simply offshoots of these verbal spars, and the final climactic battle arrives only after the participants thoroughly size each other up through social interaction.

A Fistful of Dollars is a good example. We *do* see Clint Eastwood's Man With No Name portrayed as Death Incarnate, but he doesn't have to shoot 80% of the people he wants dead. Instead - through lies, manipulation and varying amounts of bull - he maneuvers the other 20% into doing it for him. He uses the force of his personality to gain the greatest possible advantage without having to resort to overt gunplay for more than a few well-placed scenes.

And what about the Man With No Name? Isn't he a staple of Leone's films? Doesn't he cause undue amounts of problems to role-playing adapters? Certainly. But the mystery of his presence is less accented, and he invariably has immediate goals which can be understood within the context of the film. We don't know where he's come from, or what his past has been like, but we know what he's after in terms of the storyline. A player can create a character within such a context, give him a background and then keep it to himself, preserving the appeal of the stereotype without feeling too limited. Whereas films like *Shane* or *High Plains Drifter* maintain an impenetrable mystery around their title characters, Leone's protagonists have enough immediately recognizable motivations to fill them out without destroying that mystery.

Furthermore, since every character in Leone's films has an air of ambiguity about him or her, it is possible for multiple Men With No Name to appear on the scene and take part in a campaign. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, *For a Few Dollars More* and *Once Upon A Time in the West* both have several Men With No Name tramping through the scenery, and none of them seem to steal each other's thunder.

This isn't to say that the problems which plague western RPGs will vanish under these conditions. But they do become more manageable, and the chances of pulling off a successful campaign increase dramatically. The revisionist efforts of Sergio Leone (and those that followed him) give the western the atmosphere it needs to become "RPG-viable," and provide the best opportunities to exploit this sadly neglected genre. The spaghetti western isn't for everyone, but for those interested in giving the genre an RPG try, it offers the best possibility for success. John Ford and Jimmy Stewart haven't been able to save the genre for role-players, but Clint Eastwood and some badly dubbed Italians might.

As implied before, western systems are pretty slim pickings these days, so the technical rules are somewhat limited. Your best bet would be GURPS Old West, which contains a popular rule system that many gamers are familiar with. Beyond that, however, Gamemasters should look to the sources for inspiration and ideas. The Old West may never be fully tapped as an RPG, but with luck, planning and careful attention to a particular atmosphere, a rich and rewarding western setting can still be achieved.

San Diablo, a spaghetti western setting for your campaign.

San Diablo is a campaign setting based loosely on Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns of the 1960s. The town is located somewhere near the Mexican border, but has deliberately been left inspecific and should remain that way. Players can arrive there for any number of reasons and rapidly become entangled in the numerous plots, subplots and sinister schemes which abound. Violence is a casual way of life here, but don't let your players simply gun their way through. Most of the players in town are either far too tough to take on, or have friends who are.

Overview

San Diablo began as an army outpost on the frontier and quickly grew to a thriving town of over one thousand. Eventually, however, the army moved on and the community fell prey to the numerous two-legged wolves who roam the frontier. A sheriff was elected, but he was quickly

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San Diablo
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killed by a pair of ruthless bandits terrorizing the local area - John Wescombe and Xavier de Bascale. Most of the town's honest citizens cleared out soon thereafter.

Wescombe and de Bascale soon had the local outlaws unified under them. They wiped out their opposition and took over the town, driving any legitimate businesses out on the next rail. They began using San Diablo as a base, launching forays against nearby farmsteads, stagecoaches and the occasional army convoy. Trains ceased making stops in the town soon thereafter and the army moved its nearby travel route away from the dangers of the area.

Eventually, the partnership between the two outlaws dissolved. Some unknown dispute caused the former friends to part ways, and their gang fractured between them. Having eliminated all external opposition, they turned their resources against each other and San Diablo became the center of their power struggle.

The pair has been at each other's throats for as long as anybody can remember, and the constant skirmishing between their two forces threatens to explode into full-blown war at any time. At the moment, a tentative peace exists between the two, but both sides have what they feel is a definitive tie-breaker (see character descriptions below) and things will become mighty ugly in the near future.

Despite all of this, San Diablo appears to be a peaceful town most of the time. Gunfights occur intermittently, but the bandits mostly limit their squabbles to the evening hours. Both sides have been too bloodied by the conflict to risk an escalation, despite their ever-increasing hatred of each other. So San Diablo maintains a very calm outer surface, while the hatred and greed of its two rulers boils on underneath the facade. This situation has remained unchanged for as long as anyone can remember.

The few townsfolk left live in mortal fear of the outlaws and their henchmen. Most of them are weak and greedy themselves, lured into staying by the riches the bandits have procured over the years. All of the businesses are owned by either Wescombe or de Bascale, with the exception of the undertaker's, which has stayed independent by virtue of necessity (nobody wants corpses rotting in the streets, even if they're the corpses of the enemy.)

Locations in San Diablo

1: Undertaker's Shop - The only honest establishment in town, and the only one which is still run by its original owner. Nicodemus Klipenstein arrived here some ten years ago from his native Germany, hoping to become rich carving tombstones and arranging for the recently deceased. Needless to say, San Diablo has been a watershed for him.

The shop contains a main room displaying several headstones and coffins. The coffins are typically simple pine boxes, although occasionally Nicodemus has managed to procure something a little more high class. Most of his customers don't complain about the fineries regardless. There is a back room for preparing corpses and a small office for conducting business behind the main display area. Nicodemus lives in a small apartment above the store, which can be reached through a set of stairs in the back room.

2: Bar - For obvious reasons, this is the most popular business in San Diablo. Most of its decor has been shot up by Wescombe or de Bascale's men; all that remains are a few weather-worn tables, chairs and a long bar. A few shards of the mirror behind the bar still remain and a makeshift chandelier keeps the establishment lit during evening hours. The word BAR has been hastily scrawled in white paint above the front door, replacing the ornate sign that once hung there.

The current bartender is Hector Belmont, a local farmer pressed into service after the deaths of the previous three bartenders. He is steely-eyed and quiet, with little to distinguish him from his predecessors; his main concern is keeping the patrons happy and staying alive. Besides Belmont, Charlie the Crab Boy can often be found here, begging for money outside the front doors or just listening.

3: Barbershop/Bathhouse - This ramshackle establishment has been converted from an unfinished stable; it consists of a single wide room filled up with several bathtubs, a requisite number of screens, three barber's chairs and a single long mirror along one wall. Support posts dot the floor, and patrons and employees alike must move with caution, lest they walk headlong into a random beam.

Working as a barber here is considered a near-death sentence, since a single nick or misplaced hair is grounds for being shot. Nonetheless, the three employees do their jobs efficiently and work hard to stay on the various outlaws' good sides.

4: Cemetery - There are some four hundred gravesites here, almost as many as there are people in San Diablo. For obvious reasons, it expands with each new skirmish, and Nicodemus Klipenstein is kept busy ensuring that enough plots are available. Most graves are adorned with simple wooden crosses (shaky, badly constructed and often rotting), but the occasional engraved headstone breaks the monotony (only the closest friends of Wescombe or de Bascale merit these.)

A coffin holding approximately seventy-five thousand dollars is buried beneath an unmarked grave site. No one besides Nicodemus knows it's there, and Nicodemus isn't talking (see character descriptions and adventure hooks for more information.)

5: Hotel/Bordello - The San Diablo Hotel lost whatever legitimacy it had long ago. Its first owner was killed over a disputed bill and his various successors each decided there were better places to earn a living. No one comes through San Diablo any more, so the hotel has become a *de facto* whorehouse for Wescombe and de Bascale's men. The standard "crop" of professional prostitutes is augmented from time to time by women from nearby farms. They are kidnapped and blackmailed into serving at the hotel, in exchange for the lives of their husbands and children.

The finery of the San Diablo Hotel has not diminished from its early days, unlike the rest of the town. The front room is decorated in crushed velvet and gold. There are fifteen rooms of various sizes and states of repair upstairs, and the bordello's ten prostitutes can be found here during daylight hours. Two or three guards are invariably posted outside.

6: Train Station - This small covered platform houses the town's only regular means of egress. Unfortunately, trains no longer stop here, so characters hot to leave

need to get creative in order to gain the engineer's attention. Trains pass through about once every three days, and the outlaws tend to leave them alone.

There is a small telegraph office here, run by a nervous old man, Roberto Escobedo. He can send out any message the characters wish, but both outlaws check up on him regularly (a fact he will neglect to mention), so secrecy is all but impossible. A few gunslingers of one side or the other are invariably lounging about the platform, and Jesus Casparo occasionally spends his days here, strumming his guitar.

7: Wescombe's Hacienda - John Wescombe and his gang make their camp in this stone fortress of a mansion on the west side of town. Walled and guarded, the inside of the hacienda contains every pleasure imaginable, and Wescombe treats his loyal henchmen to extravagant luxury. There is a large kitchen, an open eating area and enough other facilities to support over fifty men. Wescombe has his own private quarters where he and his mistress du jour spend their nights. The bulk of his unspent riches lies in a large safe in his bedroom, and his quarters are always heavily guarded. The center courtyard has been turned into a makeshift shooting gallery. At any time, there are thirty to forty of his men here; the rest are out on raids of one sort or another.

8: De Bascale's Hacienda - Xavier de Bascale has taken up residence here, and dominates the local countryside with his army of desperadoes. More open and airy than Wescombe's headquarters, de Bascale has compensated by removing all surrounding buildings, allowing him to see anyone approaching. The layout is based around a central courtyard, like Wescombe's, but consists of several outlying buildings, rather than just one. De Bascale and his wife and five children make their home in one, and his army of followers have quarters in the other four. As Wescombe's, this place is heavily fortified, with enough armed men lounging about to give even the most cocksure gunslinger pause.

9: La Santa Maria riverbed - This river has been dry for some time, but the army still uses it as a convoy route when they must move supplies through the region. The outlaws have preyed heavily on such convoys in the past, however, and extreme precautions are now taken. Guns, ammunition, food and other supplies are heavily guarded en route to forts further west.

10: Sheriff's Office/Jail - This small stone building has been gutted by fire and lies deserted. Ashes and burned furniture litter the floor and rotten wooden beams poke out from the ceiling. The rusted doors of the building's three jail cells lie askance, or have been knocked off entirely. Under a beam in the corner lies the weather-beaten skeleton of Sheriff Hank Dunbar, unmoved since his death at the hands of Wescombe and de Bascale. No one has dared to remove the body for fear of the bandit lords' reprisals, and the building has been utterly abandoned for some time. Most are afraid even to approach it.

The remaining buildings in the town are either abandoned, or hold families of terrorized farmers. The farmers give a percentage of their crops to the bandits and are allowed to live in return. Most of those willing or able to leave have already done so, and the few that are left work hard to get into the outlaws' good graces. Some have sold their daughters into service at the bordello. Some work as servants in the bandits haciendas or inform on neighbors who may be holding out. All of them are stricken with fear for their lives, but remain held in thrall of the bandits' incredible wealth.

De Bascale's and Wescombe's men are all standard gunslingers, armed with whatever the GM feels is appropriate. All are skilled with firearms and quick to anger. They tend to clump together in groups of three or four, and none of them show much initiative, imagination or intelligence (those who did have long since been killed).

Hook, Line and Sinkers

The following is a brief list of the central stories within San Diablo. Any one of them can be spun out to form an excellent story for a group of western characters.

Should Old Acquaintance Be Forgot...

Hook: The characters have just arrived in San Diablo, and a group of thugs picks a fight with them.

Line: The party (hopefully) disposes of their opponents, only to learn they belonged to one of the town's two gangs (GM's discretion which one). They have now earned the enmity of the thugs' compatriots, and will have to take drastic action if they want to survive.

Sinker: Depending on how the characters conduct themselves here, they could be approached by the other side and offered employment. Or, they could come to the other side and asked to be protected. Either way, they are now embroiled in the struggle, and will have make their moves very carefully if they don't want to end up dead (neither side looks favorably on deserters.)

Players planning to kill de Bascale or Wescombe in an attempt to escape should be especially cautious, as the two let no one but trusted henchmen close to them. See the character descriptions below for more information on how to run de Bascale and Wescombe.

Avenging the Law

Hook: The characters are approached by several of the town's former residents. They explain the story of Sheriff Hank Dunbar, and ask them to find his remains and give them a proper burial.

Line: Arriving in San Diablo, the characters soon learn where the sheriff lies. Unfortunately, the town's two rulers will *not* look favorably on people meddling with Dunbar's corpse.

Sinker: Any attempt to move the sheriff's remains, or give them a proper burial will be met with fierce resistance from both sides. The party will have to use stealth and guile if they want to get the body out of San Diablo safely (unless they feel like taking on the bandit kings, that is.)

Alternately, a party trying to stir up trouble between the two sides could use the sheriff's remains as a catalyst. Both Wescombe and de Bascale are afraid of the sheriff's ghost, and clever characters can plant evidence suggesting that Dunbar has indeed risen from the grave. Such evidence could goad the outlaws into almost anything, from starting their war anew to uniting against what they perceive as a common threat. GM's discretion and individ-

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ual character motivations will have a huge bearing on this scenario.

The Prostitute

Hook: A male character is enjoying the "attentions" of one of the San Diablo hotel's residents, and mentions the idea of leaving. He suddenly realizes that his formerly dull and lifeless partner has taken an interest in his words.

Line: The woman is Emily Villa Lobos and is desperate to escape from San Diablo (see her character description below). She will offer the character anything he wants if he will just take her with him. Emily is very persistent, and will eventually disregard her own safety in attempting to win her "rescuer" over.

Sinker: What Emily has neglected to mention is that her family is being held hostage in return for her good behavior. Obviously, neither of the bandit lords would look to highly upon anyone who would assist her, and will bring a terrible revenge upon her family should she escape. Whether the players know this or not, and whether they care enough to do anything about it is up to the indivdual campaign. The bandits will, of course, send men out after Emily, in addition to massacring her family.

All That Glitters

Hook: The character hear a rumor that there is gold buried in the San Diablo graveyard.

Line: Entering the town, the players get in touch with Nicodemus Klipenstein, who can relate the following: Several months ago, a band of de Bascale's men massacred an army convoy carrying a shipment of gold. Their employer believes they only procured a few thousand dollars; the exact amount is closer to seventy-five thousand. They hid the bulk of it in the coffin of one of their fallen comrades and had it buried with them.

Klipenstein prepared the coffins and knows about the gold, but he doesn't know which grave it's buried in; de Bascale's men threatened to kill him if he appeared at the funeral to see where it was buried. He has kept his mouth shut ever since, and plans to use the information as a bargaining chip. The rogue outlaws who buried the gold have all been killed in various altercations, and Nicodemus is the only remaining link to the treasure. For the right price, he is prepared to point out the five possible gravesites to the players

Sinker: De Bascale will not look kindly on grave robbers and characters attempting to retrieve the gold will have his forces to contend with. In addition, if any rumors get out concerning the treasure, both bandit kings will go to great lengths to recover it. Either way is bad news for the players. GMs should interperet this scenario based on the indivdual actions and motivations of the players.

El Mariachi

Hook: The guitar player Jesus Casparo has been invited to play at a party for either of the outlaws (whichever one the players haven't totally offended). The characters should be in attendence.

Line: After an incredible performance, El Mariachi retires, leaving the revelers to...well...revel. The seemingly harmless Jesus Casparo has a secret agenda, however. He has been paid to start a war between Wescombe and de Bascale. Once he is alone, he will steal as much as he can, plant evidence incriminating the other side, and blow town ASAP. He feels that he can charm his way out of any situation, and thus has not thought his plans out very well. Wescombe and de Bascale, however, are too suspicious of each other to consider the possibility of outside interference. They will interpret any actions on Casparo's part as an attack by the other, and one the theft is known, an all-out war will erupt.

Sinker: The characters' position in all of this depends on their own agendas and their allegiances when the deal goes down. They may be blamed for the thefts, or may be part of a gang sent to "get some payback" from the other side. Either way, however, they should realize that all is not what it seems, and that El Mariachi is the party responsible. Depending on their feelings, they can either hunt him down and earn the bandits' gratitude or leave him and let San Diablo die a slow and well deserved death. ❑

"HLS Goes to Hollywood" Winners

Remember back in issue 18.5 when we published the "HLS goes to Hollywood Contest?" The winner won a free four-day pass to GENCON and a bunch of cool SHADIS stuff. The runners up got free copies of SHADIS 15. Well, lo and behold, GenCon is upon us, so we thought it proper to announce our winner: Steven Keck of Banning, CA. Steve properly identified all eight of the correct answers:

1. Outbreak
2. Die Hard
3. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
4. It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World
5. Tombstone
6. Alien
7. Aliens
8. Crocodile Dundee

Congratulations to Steve, and thanks to all who participated. See you at GenCon!

The Undertaker

Nicodemus Klipenstein

Skills: Etiquette, Embalming, Funerals

Motivation: Money

Weakness: Out of shape

Nicodemus Klipenstein serves as the town's undertaker, gravedigger and coffin builder, a trade he learned in his native Germany. He relishes his unique position in San Diablo as the only independent businessman and has become quite wealthy burying the countless dead.

Nicodemus is a fat, leering pile of a man, who can barely squeeze into his tailored black suits. Despite his size and the setting he has found himself in, he pays close attention to his appearance. He is clean shaven, his hair is combed and parted in a widow's peak, and his tight clothing is always neat. He powders himself heavily to cut down on sweat.

He will be morbidly polite to anyone approaching him, and will try to convince newcomers that they may need his...services before leaving. He will be sure and measure any recently arrived characters and begin working on their coffins promptly. He is full of rumors about the outlaws and speaks of their constant skirmishing with greedy anticipation. Those who deal with him find his preoccupations and mannerisms decidedly unnerving. ❑

The Telegrapher

Roberto Escobedo

Skills: Telegraphy, Dodge

Motivation: Self-preservation

Weakness: Old

Escobedo runs the local telegraph office at the behest of San Diablo's rulers. He spends almost all of his time at the train station listening for messages, and promptly sends whatever he hears over to the appropriate outlaw. He is an old man who has long since given up moving elsewhere, and can be easily bullied into coughing up everything he knows. The bandits have learned to entrust nothing secret to him, as their respective opponents can easily extract whatever information he's carrying.

Escobedo is wrinkled beyond his years and walks with a constant stoop. He has the frightened, darting eyes of a rabbit that belie his slow-moving exterior. He limits his comings and goings between the office and his nearby shack, which he feels keeps him safe. He will shift nervously from foot to foot when dealing with anybody, and will try and keep transactions to an absolute minimum. ❑

The Bartender

Hector Belmont

Skills: Bartending, Dodge, Observation

Motivation: Greed/self preservation

Weakness: Lack of loyalty

Hector is San Diablo's current bartender, having inherited the position from a slew of deceased predecessors. He typifies the non-outlaw inhabitants of San Diablo: weak, greedy, and willing to do whatever the bandits say to stay alive. He has fortified the back of the bar where he works with pieces of cast-iron, and depends on them to keep him intact during the multiple gunfights incurred during drinking hours.

He is an average-sized Hispanic man with prematurely white hair and a cold glint in his eye. He keeps his mouth shut around the customers, a firm believer in the "stick-your-neck-out-for-nobody" philosophy. He has learned not to volunteer information, but can be convinced to help characters if he sees some advantage in it. He knows better than to hold anything out on the outlaws. ❑

The Bandit King

Xaviar de Bascale

Skills: Firearms, Tactics, Negotiation

Motivation: Killing Wescombe

Weakness: Family man

Xaviar de Bascale is the first half of San Diablo's ruling elite and the most powerful man in the entire area. He commands an army of nearly one hundred men, who raid farms, villages, passing convoys and the occasional train to fill his coffers. Only the presence of John Wescombe keeps him from ruling San Diablo undisputed.

De Bascale harbors a secret weapon that he hopes will permanently tip the scales of the conflict in his favor. On a recent raid, he procured over two hundred pounds of dynamite, and plans to use it to destroy Wescombe's headquarters when the time is right. He may hire the characters to plant the explosives for him, if he feels they can be trusted.

De Bascale is a tall, dark skinned man with a handlebar mustache and deep acne scars. He speaks softly and with great authority, but he has a trustworthy air that endears many to him. He has a warm fatherly image when around his five children, but can turn harsh and cruel quickly if he is crossed: he is still a master with the six-gun. His eldest son, Jonah, is being bred for leadership of the gang some day, and his henchmen go out of their way to defer to the twelve-year old child. ❑

The Wild Side

John Wescombe

Skills: Firearms, Strategy, Intimidation

Motivation: Destroying de Bascale

Weakness: Quick-tempered

Wescombe is the younger half of the outlaw duo who brought San Diablo under their thumb. He is wilder and more impulsive than his older rival, but has the backbone and craftiness to back up his short temper. Of the two, Wescombe is the likelier to venture from his fortified hideout.

Wescombe harbors a secret weapon that he believes will wipe out de Bascale's power once and for all. He has stolen a half dozen Gatling machine guns and ammunition from a distant army outpost, and has recently had them shipped here. When the time is right, he will unleash their firepower on his hated adversary.

Wescombe is a short, fiery man with bright red hair and an unsettling smile. He speaks energetically and can't seem to keep his hands still when he talks. He flushes bright red when he loses his temper and has been known to shoot men for spilling the head on his beer. His henchmen have a tremendous combination of fear and respect for him and are constantly vying for favored status. His riches are exceeded only by de Bascale's, and then only slightly. ❑

The Freak

Charlie Daniels

Skills: Observation, Acrobatics

Motivation: To be accepted

Weakness: Physical deformity

Charlie, The Incredible Crab Boy, has found himself here after the circus he had lived with from birth decided they didn't need him anymore. Charlie's joints are reversed; his elbows, knees, wrists and ankles all bend the wrong way, forcing him to move in a sort of scuttling lope. The bandits keep him around for amusement, and he has learned to survive off of discarded scraps he can be found on the sidewalk.

Charlie would be tall if he ever stood up straight, and his limbs jut out from his skinny body at unnatural angles. He cuts his hair close, but having only a rusty penknife to do it with, it comes off in scraps and pieces. He misses the attention of the circus life, and tries to amuse passersby with a plethora of freakish acrobatics.

He's currently the only decent person in San Diablo, and if treated well, can become a valuable asset for the characters. He hears a great deal of what goes on, and has become such a fixture of the town that people pay little attention to where he goes and what he sees. ❑

The Martyr

Hank Dunbar

Skills: Gunslinging, Law, Intimidation

Motivation: To be the best

Weakness: Dead

Sheriff Hank Dunbar was elected by the good people of San Diablo to enforce the peace and protect them from the depredations of local bandits. Obviously, he was less than successful. A few weeks after taking office, he was brutally murdered by Wescombe and de Bascale after a brief confrontation in his office. The building was burned to the ground and the body was left to rot. Dunbar's death marked the end of any legitimate form of law enforcement in San Diablo.

Hank was a tall, tanned man with deep brown eyes and a soft spoken demeanor. He was handy with weapons and showed no compunction about using them if the situation called for it. He ran for sheriff unopposed, and seemed to view the office as a means of testing himself against the local gunslingers. Nevertheless, many felt he was the best man for an admittedly ugly job.

The locals (farmer and gunslinger alike) believe his ghost still haunts the Sheriff's Office, and no one has ventured into it since his death. Wescombe and de Bascale, in particular, are frightened of the possibility of an avenging spirit, although neither would admit it (even under torture.) ❑

The Lady of the Evening

Emily Villa Lobos

Skills: Endurance, Observation

Motivation: To escape San Diablo

Weakness: Desperate

Emily is one of the ten ladies of the evening held in the San Diablo hotel. She found herself there after a raid on her parents' farm by Wescombe's men, and has since hidden much of herself behind an impenetrable wall of dull indifference. The only thing that interests her is a reasonable hope of escape from San Diablo; if the prospect is brought up, she will become animated and excited, encouraging any developments along those lines. Should any of the characters present themselves as resucers, she will hurl herself at them with reckless abandon. Other topics will earn only a few grunts and a vacant lifeless stare.

Emily is of South American heritage, with silky brown hair and large dark eyes. Those eyes glitter like a doll's most of the time, lighting up only if she hears something about leaving San Diablo. She harbors a bitter resentment towards her family, who she feels has abandoned her in her hour of need. She will be unconcerned if the prospect of their demise comes up. ❑

El Mariachi

Jesus Casparo

Skills: Performance, Charm

Motivation: To destroy San Diablo

Weakness: Overconfident

Jesus Casparo has come north from Mexico with his guitar and burro to seek his fortunes. A talented singer and musician, he claims that San Diablo will give him the riches he feels he deserves. He plays at the bar almost every evening and is rapidly becoming a favorite amongst its patrons. Sooner or later, he will be invited to one of the haciendas to play, which fits into his plans nicely.

Jesus's true reason for coming to San Diablo is far darker than his honest exterior. He has been hired by party or parties unknown to start a war between the two outlaw kings (see "El Mariachi," above.) He sees San Diablo as an irredeemable scum-pit, and has no compunctions about bringing it down (of course, the money's nice, too...).

Jesus is tall and handsome, with dark wavy hair and a gleaming smile. He can charm the socks off anyone he chooses to, and can bring grown men to tears with his singing. Nonetheless, his charm is a facade that hides unknowable depths; those who deal with him for long periods of time can't help but notice that he holds much of himself back, and leave feeling used by him in some manner. ❑

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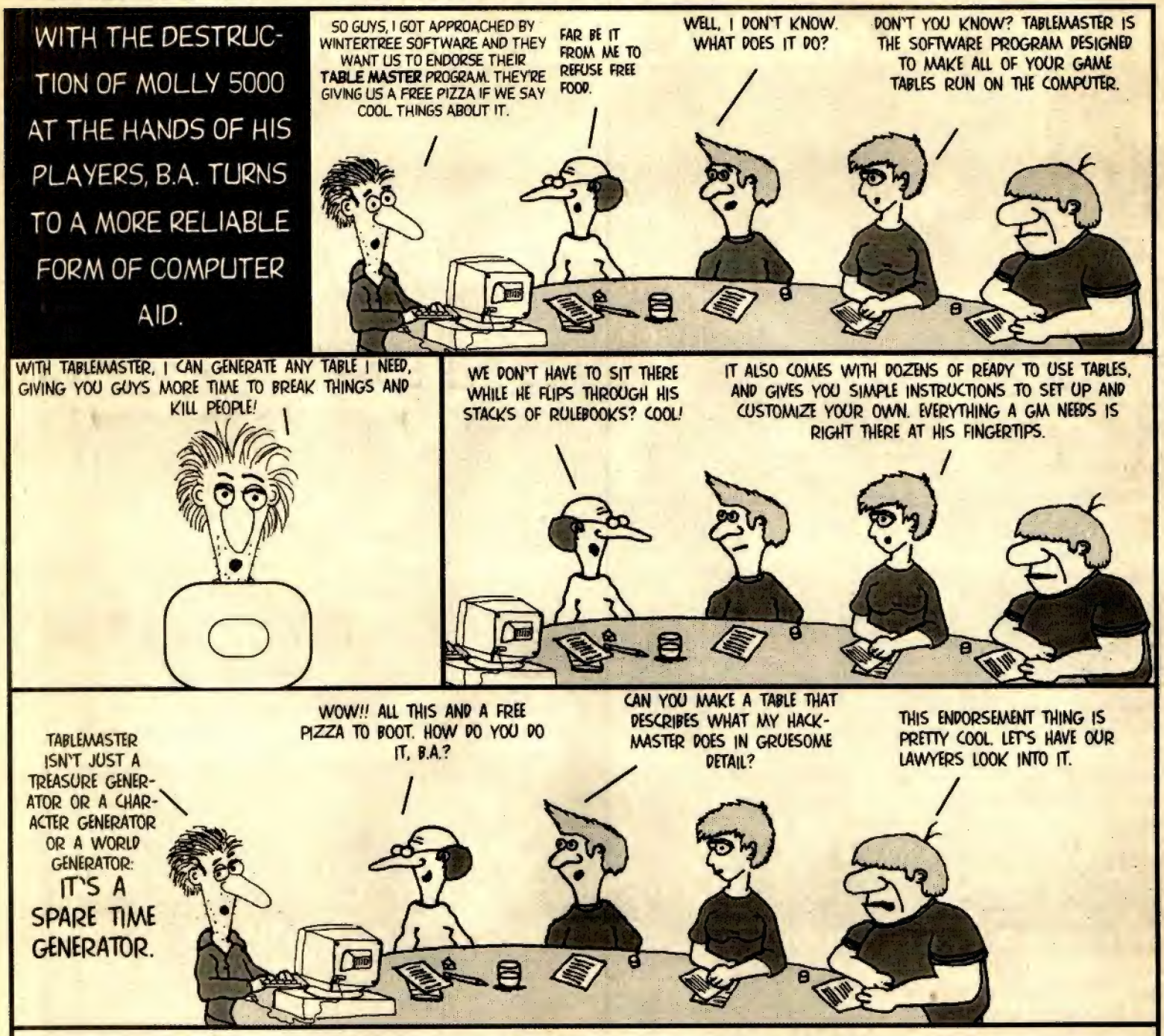

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Noble Encounters

Instant Aristocrats for Your Fantasy Campaign

By Larry Granato © 1995

Noble characters are a staple of fantasy role-playing, but they are not just confined to that period. Historically, aristocrats played a dominant role in society right through the 19th century. The following material on noble encounters leans towards fantasy games, but can be adapted for Victorian, gothic horror and even science-fiction genres.

As PCs grow in power and prestige, they are likely to come into increasing contact with members of the upper class. The GM may have determined that some PCs were born into the nobility; others may be knighted or acquire titles for great deeds or the right amount of money.

Since the nobles hold most of the power and wealth, PCs need to be concerned about their relations with the aristocracy. How characters interact with the nobility will determine a multitude of conditions that affect them: how much taxes they'll pay, how much bureaucratic red-tape they'll have to put up with, how much influence they'll have, what favors they can call on, their ability to attract quality followers, getting favorable court judgments, having access to rare merchandise, and so on.

The upper class can be divided roughly in three parts. The lowest are the gentry, who have some noble or knightly ancestry, but no titles. Lawyers, sages, doctors, religious figures, and government officials are also considered members of the gentry. In general, any well-to-do person can represent themselves as a gentleman as long as they act the part and are not known to be of a lowly birth.

The chivalric, or knightly class, is the second part. They consist of "belted" knights (those who've been formally knighted), those who have the honorific "sir," and landed squires and wealthy gentlemen-at-arms who are knights in all but name.

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The true nobility make up the highest part of the upper class. Not all nobles have titles, some being known simply as "lord." Sometimes, great knights are considered part of the nobility. Titles are usually inherited or granted by a monarch. There is a strict hierarchy of ranks among the titled nobility, but in practice, a powerful nobleman of low rank will be of more importance than a higher ranking, but poorer, noble. Nobles can be encountered in towns of any size and near their home castles. They are always accompanied by a retinue of servants and guards appropriate to their station.

PCs will eventually become familiar with the aristocrats in their locality. They can also meet larger numbers of nobles in capital cities and at a ruler's court. Most kings and nobles make regular visits to various parts of their realms, so it's possible to encounter them just about anywhere.

The noble NPCs listed below can be used to spice up otherwise routine encounters. They represent stereotypes the GM can "flesh out" with backgrounds and motives appropriate for his campaign. Unlike the monsters or ordinary citizens the party often encounters, nobles will be careful to size up the party and make a determination of how the PCs can be manipulated to achieve the noble's goals. Outright combat doesn't usually occur, as more subtle methods will be used. Many nobles are enjoy meddling in characters' lives, and the more successful the PCs are, the more likely they are to attract some aristocrat's attention.

PCs who make acquaintances among the nobility will find that the aristocracy is usually divided into factions along family and regional lines. Friendship with one noble will create ill-feelings toward the PC from members of an opposing faction. In the same way, insulting a noble will not only make an enemy of him, but his entire family, his retainers, the tenants of his lands, his clan and his political party as well. [*Editor's note: see our Clans articles in issues #20 and #21 (forthcoming) for information on how to create an irritated noble's extended family.*]

The entire idea of nobility encompasses a standard of behavior known as the code of chivalry, and epitomizes the ideals of knighthood. Courtesy is important. Rudeness by a PC will not necessarily lead to violence, but the offender is marked as "low-born," and is ostracized by the upper crust. This inevitably gets around and extends to associates and businessmen (e.g., "I'm sorry we can't sell you any more magic items, but our it's policy to deal only with well-bred customers.").

If a PC is gratuitously insulting, a challenge to combat is likely - at least if he's high-born. If he's a commoner, a thrashing at the hands of the offended noble's lackeys is more likely. The offended noble will usually choose a champion who is at least equal in combat ability to the PC to fight for him. Nobles will personally fight only when a PC is of the same rank of nobility and when they're sure they can win.

Ultimately, the PCs will find a way to get along with the nobles and may even join their ranks.

Templates

1. **The Country Squire/Knight** - This thick-headed person is rarely seen in cities and is noted for his unfashionable clothes, obsolete manners and out-of-date gossip. Seasoned courtiers find these bumpkins a source of endless amusement, and deride those who associate with them. He's a loyal, if dull, friend, who is of importance only on his own manor or village.

2. **The Noble of the Robe** - These aristocrats originally came from the upper middle class. They hold various positions in the bureaucracy, and tend to be officious, reactionary and pompous. They are especially sensitive about their honor, since they are disparaged by the warrior nobles because of their ancestry. If the PCs don't show proper deference to them, the GM should make it difficult for the PCs to transact official business.

3. **The Exiled Noble** - A foreign nobleman who has been exiled from his homeland for some crime he committed, or for falling into disfavor with his government. There is a good possibility he is planning to return home to re-establish himself.

4. **The Knight Errant** - A well-equipped, boastful warrior who supports himself from the prizes he wins by jousting in tournaments. He is likely to challenge

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others (especially PCs) for the flimsiest of reasons.

5. **The Foreign Royal Claimant** - This person has some claim to the throne of a neighboring land. He's inevitably involved in a plot to regain his legacy, and makes grandiose (but often worthless) promises to all and sundry.

6. **The Poor Knight/Impoverished Noble** - Living in genteel poverty, he wears expensive but worn clothes and tries to hide his lack of money. He's too proud to ask for help and, naturally, a gentleman does not work for a living. PCs who befriend a poor noble will find themselves pressured in various ways to support him without giving outright charity or requiring any recompense except a lot of flowery words.

7. **The Dowager Noblewoman** - This elderly matron is overbearing, strict, unforgiving and influential. However, she is a fierce protector of persons whom she likes. She is always accompanied by her longtime servant/confidant and a small obnoxious pet. Characters who fail to meet her exacting standards will inevitably incur her wrath.

8. **The Young Noblewoman** - This beautiful damsel is accompanied by her maids and an overprotective old nanny/chaperon. Since her family has already arranged a marriage for her (to an older noble), any romantic interest shown by a PC will result in warnings, harassment or even a challenge from the family retainers and her husband-to-be.

9. **The Masked Avenger** - This noblemen appears to be a Fop (see #43), but when action is needed, he dons a disguise and responds with a vengeance. He has exceptional abilities, is an experienced combatant, and possesses at least one powerful magic item. He may have a companion with similar skills. He might rescue the PCs if they are in trouble, or avenge some slight they've inflicted on an innocent person.

10. **The Rake** - A dashing, arrogant young noble. An experienced warrior or mage, he is likely to insult a PC, and is usually accompanied by a group of friends of similar abilities.

11. **The Yahoos** - A group of adolescent nobles out on an adventure. They're too old to be treated as children, but they're not adults either. They can be expected to get in trouble and blame it on the PCs.

12. **The Officer** - An "officer and gentleman" of the ruler's military. If properly approached, he can be a valuable source of information about goings-on at court. However, he has little time or patience for "common" adventurers. He cannot be bribed.

13. **The Younger Son** - He's last in line for the family inheritance and is looking for a future elsewhere. He's a potential follower for a PC who can provide him with a "gentle" (*i.e.*, expensive) lifestyle.

14. **The Scholar** - This noble is a famous scientist/philosopher, and possesses sage-like abilities. He is absent-minded and gets cranky when crossed. He is accompanied by a faithful student.

15. **The Impostor** - This person is only pretending to be a noble. He's a crook scheming to purloin the money and valuables of the PCs. He may use simple theft or perpetrate some fraudulent investment scheme.

16. **The Minor Noble** - An aristocrat with a very minor title and holding, but who carries himself as if he were king. He'll try to convince the PCs he's very important and get them to consult him often. In return, he will promise to be their "patron," but his advice is worthless and his influence is nil.

17. **The Despicable Duke** - A nobleman of surpassing power and wealth who is much more powerful than any PC. He usually displays a facade of benevolence, but is a sinister schemer. He is sure to try to involve the party in plots that will put them into conflict with his enemies. He never forgets or forgives an insult, and his spies are everywhere. The GM can use this NPC as an adversary who can't be taken on by brute force, and make the players come up with creative solutions.

18. **The Moocher** - An aristocrat who travels about, leeching off his hosts. He will insinuate himself into a household, buttering people up whenever he gets a

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chance. When his welcome wears out, he will slip away, leaving large debts in his host's name.

19. **The Noble Brat** - An angelic-faced youngster, who acts the innocent in front of his parents, but is a little terror otherwise. Using physical force to restrain the child is considered an attack against his family. If the PCs do some baby-sitting, a typical scenario would involve the child running away, and the party trying to find him before the parents get back.

20. **The Quixotic Knight** - A bumbling knight who is always planning some ludicrous quest and invites the PCs along. The results are usually a debacle but occasionally, he accomplishes a triumph against seemingly impossible odds.

21. **The Illegitimate Noble** - The product of an illicit relationship, the illegitimate noble is very unlikely to inherit lands or titles. This makes him especially ambitious and crafty in his plans for advancement. He is careful to cultivate friendships among people of all kinds (including the PCs) for his own purposes.

22. **The Brash Noble** - This young nobleman is headstrong and rash. He will always be rushing into danger and will be contemptuous of those holding back. The party will take the blame if anything bad happens to him. He will always consider hmself as the natural leader.

23. **The Noble Minstrel** - A noble who is a talented poet, singer and renowned composer. He will to pay courtly romance to female PCs, or a male PC's girlfriend or spouse. If the PCs impress him, they might be celebrated in his next composition, but if they act foolishly, jealously, or ridicule him, he will deride them in a song that will soon become popular and well-known.

24. **The Eccentric Old Nobleman** - Eh what? Somewhat deaf, stubborn and unpredictable, this gent can be both a help and a hindrance. He will only provide information or monetary support when he's allowed to accompany the party on an adventure. He is usually accompanied by an aged servant or two, and possibly an indulgent younger relative.

25. **The Pious Noble** - This man (or woman) is known for charity, mercy, fervent prayers, fasting, pacifism, etc. His only topic of discussion is religion, and he's constantly surrounded by clerics. He is waiting for the day when he can retire to a religious retreat. PCs can expect nothing from him except a religious tract or sermonette. If they rescue him from attack, the pious noble will spend his time forgiving his assailants rather than thanking his rescuers. Any who does not treat the pious noble with the utmost respect will be vilified by the community.

26. **The Fiery Damsel** - Headstrong and clever, this damsel will disguise herself and try to become a follower of the PC she's in love with. Her moods change often, but her goal is a respectable marriage. Her family will blame the PC for any trouble she gets into.

27. **The Squireen** - This man had ancestors of noble lineage, but he is now just barely above the peasant level. He resents all other nobility (including noble PCs) because of this. Of course, he adopts a superior attitude towards non-noble characters as well. He is respected by the peasantry and has considerable influence with them.

28. **The Noble Savage** - This barbarian is an important chief in his own lands, but he is out of his depth in civilization. If the PCs befriend him, they will earn his unending gratitude, but this relationship will cause scorn from the regular nobility. The barbarian chief is inevitably an embarrassment at social functions.

29. **The Haughty Aristocrat** - This obnoxious noble is steadfast in the belief of his superiority over the "lower orders." He feels that commoners should be grateful for the privilege of serving him. As for noble PCs, the aristocrat will claim to be of a higher rank, and thus their master.

30. **Old Explorer** - A noble famous for his travels and adventures. His information is less than reliable, however, and will always cost something. The Old Explorer will always have a tale to top anything the party has done. He will encourage and help plan expeditions for a fee, but will drop out at the last minute due to "a bad back" or "previous commitments."

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31. **The House Knight** - This knight does not have his own holding, so he lives in the castle of another noble and serves him or her. He may be a potential follower for a rich PC who can give him his own estate, but for now, his loyalty is towards his current lord.

32. **The Skinflint** - A petty noble whose thriftiness is extreme. Instead of extending hospitality towards visitors to his run-down castle, he will charge outrageously high prices for dismal room and board. Nothing, except possibly the air, will be free.

33. **The Amazon** - A skilled female knight who is an ardent feminist. She tends to ridicule male fighters into challenging her, and imposes humiliating penalties on anyone who loses.

34. **The Renegade** - This robber baron has taken up a life of crime and brigandage. He uses high-sounding phrases to justify his looting and stealing. If his followers capture the party, he will require their valuables for a ransom, declaring that he's the rightful ruler of the area and they owe it as taxes. If he's cornered, he will claim that the PCs have no right to judge him, and by the code of chivalry he must be brought before his peers. He will naturally attempt to escape in the meantime.

35. **The Eager Page or Squire** - A gung-ho youngster who will attach himself to (or whose relatives will unload him onto) the PC who is a knight or closest to it. He worships the code of chivalry and any action by the party which is questionable or unvalorous will make him extremely upset.

36. **The Noble Creature** - This animal (a hound, horse, bird or other beast) has exceptional qualities, maybe even the power of speech or use of simple magic. It may become a PC's pet, or a source of irritation by insulting or playing tricks on the party.

37. **The Mercenary** - One who has found war most profitable. While he claims to uphold the code of chivalry, he is fond of extorting money from towns and individuals. In peacetime, he and his small army will camp in an area and become such a nuisance that the people will pay to get them to leave. His following is numerous and well-armed.

38. **The Ensorcelled Noble** - A person under some spell: a prince turned into a frog, a princess under an unbreakable sleep spell, etc. The PCs can receive a substantial reward for solving the problem. This will be on the order of a quest and the person who threw the original spell (a *very* high level wizard) will be most annoyed at the party if they're successful at removing it.

39. **The Usurper** - A nobleman who gained his title by slaying a relation of his. (This gives you an idea of what kind of person he is.) He's so important that the PCs will have no choice but to deal with him. This will attract the ire of his enemies and the disapproval of others. He will try to use the PCs to lend legitimacy to his rule.

40. **The Noble Magic Item** - A special, intelligent, magic item with unusual abilities. It is often quarrelsome and petulant. As a "noble," it will claim to be superior to other magic items and possibly the PCs as well.

41. **The Disguised Noble** - This noble (maybe even a prince or king!) is travelling incognito, usually posing as a beggar. If the PCs mistreat him, some kind of payback is guaranteed.

42. **The Remittance Man** - A gentleman who is being paid by his influential family to stay away from home for an offense he committed. He will try to involve the party in his antics, thus getting the family angry at them, too.

43. **The Fop** - This delicate dilettante talks of nothing but the latest gossip, fads and his unending ennui. He's always dressed in the newest and most outrageous fashions. His languorous lifestyle consists mostly of attending numerous social events, and he is well-versed at subtly insulting his inferiors. Despite his appearance, there is a small chance he is a dangerous opponent in combat (think of Tim Roth in *Rob Roy*).

44. **The "Dying" Relative** - A upper class relation of one of the PCs. Supposedly extremely wealthy, he or she has been on their deathbed a long time. They hold out the promise of making the PC sole heir if he or she performs various trivial, unending and odious tasks. The relative's will is changed often, and the PC will never know if he's in or out. There are other scheming cousins also trying to butter up the old crank. When the relative actually dies (this takes a very long time), the chances are the estate has been mortgaged away and the character inherits nothing but debts.

45. **The Cowardly Knight** - This knight appears to be brave and will regale the party with tales of his prowess in combat. However, he suffers from a total fear of fighting and will avoid it at all costs. This knight is really not such a bad fellow, and under the right set of circumstances he might be assisted by the party to overcome his fears.

Group Encounters

46. **The Opposition** - A faction of aristocrats who are opposed to the current ruler. Just being seen talking to them can involve the PCs in political intrigue. There's a strong possibility of being tailed by royal spies after an encounter.

47. **The Social Climbers** - A clique of petty nobles and nouveau riche who desperately want to advance themselves and try to involve the PCs in their trivial machinations.

48. **The In-Crowd** - A trendy group associated with the Fop (#43 above). They're amazingly superficial and frivolous. It's impossible to be accepted by this group without indulging in the latest fashions and fads. They spend money carelessly and expect others to do likewise.

49. **The Heir's Hangers-on** - These people, often less than respectable, are trying to get on the good side of the next ruler. They have a knack of encouraging the heir into daring acts, while passing the blame onto others (*i.e.* the PCs). The ruler will take a very dim view of anyone accused of endangering the heir, and it's certain that the heir will not be punished, but rather the persons who have been fingered by members of this clique.

50. **The Family** - A aristocratic family who's rich, powerful, and weird (think of the Addams family). There is one normal member of the family who the PCs will meet first and introduce them to the rest of the family. ❑

In New Europa, etiquette is more than what spoon you eat soup with.

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Zine Scene

The World of Small Press

By Mitch Michaelson

There aren't that many fanzines. If you limit your selection to those that are printed in the US and cover adventure games, you're probably looking at fewer than a hundred in production. But why limit your selection? I've read dozens of zines that apply to gaming, with subjects like science fiction, horror and even politics.

Unbelievable as it may sound, I'm even going to give you information about magazines written in languages I can't read! Seven of the eleven zines in this special issue of SHADIS Presents are from the international files of Zine Scene. Only the last three are in other languages, fortunately. Bear with me while I try to figure out what games they cover and how to contact them.

Besides beginning to see the wide distances that fanzines travel, I'm also starting to witness the depth of their variety. In the past, it seemed new monsters and character classes were their stock-and-trade. But zines like **Idolum Quarterly, Serendipity's Circle, Interactive Fantasy** and even **Berg's Review of Games** are discussing philosophical, theoretical and (dare I say it) scholarly aspects of our hobby with wit and insight. So once again I find myself encouraging you to check out the world of gaming fanzines; it is as much a source of wonder and inspiration as any fantasy realm your characters have traveled. ❑

World Domination Review

Publisher: Larry & Sandra Taylor
Editor: Larry & Sandra Taylor
Frequency: Quarterly

The "Journal of Amateur Paranoia" is not exactly what I normally get in the mail. Baffling at first, I put it in my read-when-I-get-a-chance pile (which is really my never-get-a-chance-to-read pile). Fortunately, I went through the pile lately and gave **WDR** a thorough read. While not a roleplaying fanzine, it has many aspects that apply to gaming so I thought to include it.

We all know the stories about UFOs, Elvis sightings and psychic phenomena, but WDR takes those and makes fun of them. The first article in issue #8, "The Conspiracy Game," is about friends coming over to a house and telling stories about weird conspiracies involving covert government agencies, strange cults and Nazi alien Elvis impersonators. There's no winning or losing, no hard and fast rules and the players aren't supposed to really believe vampire geneticists are taking over Hollywood. It's all make believe and pure fiction, but it sounds like roleplaying, doesn't it? Heck, it sounds like a normal game of **Illuminati.**

The rest of this small, eight-page, photocopied fanzine is comprised of ads, blurbs and very funny comments, like the "Top 10 Reasons to continue exporting weapons." You can contact WDR at: World Domination Review, c/o Larry and Sandra Taylor, 5825 Balsam Road #4, Madison, WI 53711. (Yeah, like those are their REAL names....)

Idolum Quarterly

Publisher: Francis Hwang
Editor: Francis Hwang
Frequency: Quarterly

Rapidly rising as one of my favorite gaming fanzines, **Idolum Quarterly** is a highly intelligent and organized zine with an interest in dealing with roleplaying's theoretical issues. Let's skip the chatter and jump to why.

First, it's aimed at "Flannel wearing, Blood sucking, Disillusioned, Dice rolling, Generation X, TSR joke telling losers." The premier issue of this new zine was on whether roleplaying is art. It had five essays on the subject, all with completely different views. Fortunately, the authors seem quite competent writers. It would be easy to make such a topic too high-brow or well, artsy, but instead the authors approached the topic as if on a mission. All the essays read well. No wonder the zine's title is abbreviated "IQ."

The next issue was on TSR and its controversial Internet policy. Rather than being a theoretical discussion, it was journalistic. TSR has established an aggressive position defending their copyrights in netspace and Idolum Quarterly reviewed it in detail.

IQ is extremely well laid-out. There isn't much art, but the text has been arranged on the page by a talented individual. Unlike most Internet material, which is also only text, IQ is accurately proofread and edited. In short, Idolum Quarterly is well worth checking out. Contact them at: The Idolum Quarterly, 845 23rd Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414-2607.

Louis Porter's Fallout

Publisher: Manuel Porter
Editor: Louis Porter
Frequency: Quarterly

Wargame fanzines and roleplaying fanzines are very different. Roleplayers need inspiration and interesting background material; wargamers need new scenarios and statistics. **Fallout** is a wargame fanzine for **Warhammer 40K,** so you know what to expect.

Issue #3 began with two new scenarios, one called "Capture...Alive!" and the other "Demolition." Each includes fictional histories for both sides, army lists, victory conditions, deployments and tactical notes. As someone who has read many scenarios, from Star Trek to WWII games, these are top-notch. You get enough flavor to have a purpose for the combat but it doesn't limit you too much like some American Civil War scenarios do ("You can't do that because it didn't happen in the real war!").

The rest of this thin zine included a discussion on how to slowly build a Warhammer 40K army, what figures are soon to be released, a Warhammer trivia contest and two new vehicles.

Fallout is surprisingly nice to look at. The art isn't great, but the layout is and the scans are terrific. You can see the detail in the photographed figures.

If you play Warhammer 40K you might want to look at Fallout. If there is a zine for Warhammer Fantasy Battles like Fallout, I would subscribe. Contact them at: Fallout, c/o Louis Porter Jr. Inc., 12 Ironwood Dr.,

PsychoBabble

Publisher: Caelen King
Editor: Caelen King
Frequency: Quarterly

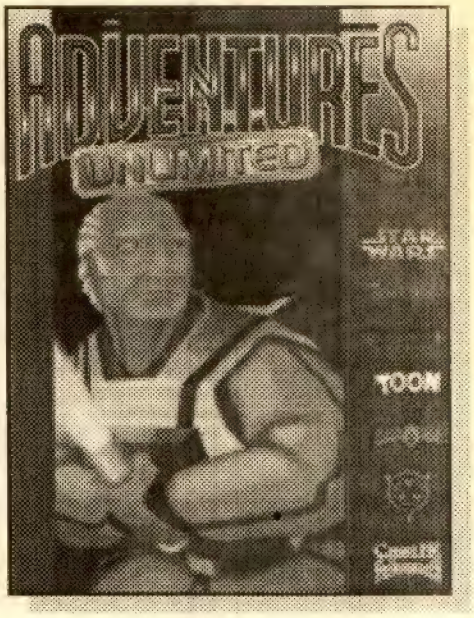
It's easy to look past **PsychoBabble** as an amusing little digest-sized zine from Ireland. But in spite of everything the staff could do, it has some useful material in it.

PsychoBabble, true to its name, is a little over the edge. The guys who write it are clearly doing it just for fun (one article had the phrase, "It's not a bald spot, it's a solar panel for a sex machine" — the office is still using that one), but they've actually produced a good game fanzine.

Issue #1 had lots of gossip, the bulk of which was up-to-date industry news. In fact, over half the first issue was industry news. I heard it first in PsychoBabble that **Jyhad** was changing its name.

In the rest of the issue, they made fun of the greed of **Magic: the Gathering** players (I like these guys already), parodied the life of a game store employee (I'm subscribing now) and tore into the world of Live Action Roleplaying (sniff...it's too good to be true, isn't it?). Sprinkled throughout the 20 page zine are phrases like "restrain the patient, nurse" and "mad, I tell you, mad."

This "games magazine for the discerning oddball" is entertaining and enlightening, no SAN roll needed. Contact them at: PsychoBabble, c/o Caelen King, Basement Flat, 2 Belvedere Place, Dublin, Ireland.



Adventures Unlimited

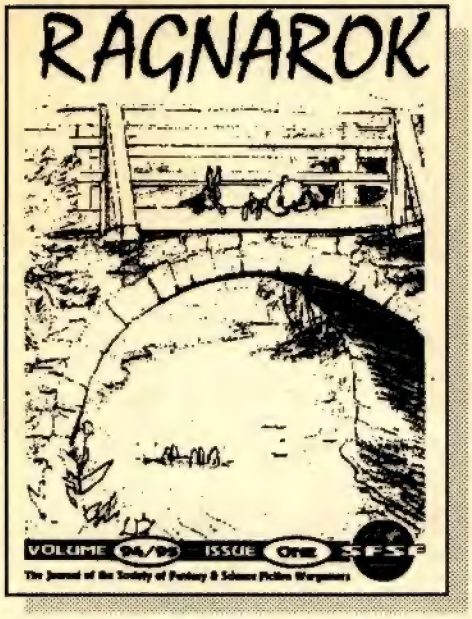
Publisher: Bootstrap Press
Editor: Lisa Smedman
Frequency: Quarterly

Adventures Unlimited is a very new magazine, being only on their second issue so far. The title summarizes its contents: adventures for roleplaying games.

Issue #2 has adventures for the following games: **Star Wars, Skyrealms of Jorune, Nephilim, Toon, EarthDawn, The Whispering Vault** and **Castle Falkenstein.** That covers the science fiction, fantasy, horror and humor genres of roleplaying. I can't think of any they missed!

The Star Wars adventure, "Forbidden Fruit," seemed very playable and it fit the mood of the Star Wars universe. "A Whiff of Danger," an Earthdawn adventure, involves the Player Characters traveling aboard an airship when they are attacked by some of the airship's other passengers, who are controlled by a Horror. The Toon adventure, most painfully titled "Nefarious Porpoises," is about a group of Supertoon characters fighting evil dolphins who are intent on stealing Big City's fish supply! The adventure includes charts like "Vegetable Occupations" and characters like the Pernicious Piranha.

The graphics in AU are as professional as any major magazine, as is the writing and art. Fortunately, they have lots of illustrations. It would be easy to stick with only popular games or only ones the staff like, but so far Adventures Unlimited have maintained variety without forgetting quality. Contact them at: Adventures Unlimited, 3893 Norfolk St., Burnaby, B.C., Canada, V5G 1E6.



Ragnarok

Publisher: SFSFW
Editor: James F. Clay
Frequency: Quarterly

You never know what a game zine has in store for you when it has Winnie the Pooh on the cover. Would you believe the current issue had an ARMY LIST for Pooh characters?!

Published by the *Society of Fantasy and Science Fiction Wargamers* in England, **Ragnarok** is a thick digest-sized zine. Besides the 48 pages of game material, it also has an additional 16 page section for **Star Trek.** The cover feels like vinyl, so I imagine these last a long time.

Issue One of the '94/'95 volume had an army list for a commercial corporation in a game called **Full Thrust,** magic rules for a game called **HOTT,** a guide to equipment for space marines in *Dark Horse Comics'* **Aliens** series, a scenario for a game called **Hell By Starlight,** a brief background on a cyberpunk/anime world called HyperCity, a long look at how people in the Dark Ages might have envisioned science fiction, an article on integrating Full Thrust with **Traveller,** a fantasy scenario for HOTT and reviews of game products. It's a lot of material!

I know a lot of games, but I have never heard of the ones printed in Ragnarok. Maybe they're popular in England. If you're interested, contact them at: Ragnarok, c/o Steve Blease, 4 Old Acre Road, Whitchurch, Bristol, England, BS14 0HN.

Valkyrie

Publisher: Partizan Press
Editor: Dave Renton
Frequency: Monthly
Country: England

Valkyrie has probably the most magnificent visual impact of any game magazine I've seen in recent memory. The inside pages are full color on glossy paper. Even the table of contents has full color art. It's very polished looking!

As for contents, it's diverse. Issue 1 had industry news, **Magic** card listings, scenarios for **Kult, AD&D** and **Star Wars,** 20 reviews of roleplaying games, a preview of a SLA Industries supplement, a massive listing of clubs and conventions in England, book reviews, computer game reviews and miniature reviews. The writing is as good as any professional magazine, maybe better.

I wish I could duplicate pages from Valkyrie rather than just the cover so you could see how amazing the interior looks. It's about the same quality as computer game magazines, with fully rendered photos. But don't let my raving about the style of Valkyrie lead you to believe it has no substance. Issue #1 also had two articles, one called "On the Anti-Libertarian Nature of Cthulu Worship" and one called "The Dark Side of the Game," which was about adding seedy sides to Player Characters.

For a premiere issue, Valkyrie really took off. As an all-around roleplaying magazine, it might be one of the world's best. Write to them at: Valkyrie, 816-818 London Road, Leigh on Sea, Southend, Essex, England, SS9 3NH.

Beaumains

Publisher: Taupe Games
Editor: Gareth Jones
Frequency: Quarterly?
Country: England

In England, a country with such a long history, people can probably trace their family lineage back to famous people. **Beaumains,** "The Arthurian Magazine for Gamers," probably has a special interest to them. Although it doesn't explicitly say so, I believe Beaumains is mainly meant for the game **Pendragon,** by *Chaosium.*

The Summer '94 issue started with a table for generating Pendragon characters in the fifth century, including events for their grandfather's and father's lives. The issue also has a new knightly order (the Order of St. Alban), two adventures for Pendragon, a glossary of ancient words (starting at the letter N, so I assume A-M were in a previous issue), a letters column entitled "The Quest for the Holy Mail," a new character class for Pendragon and a guide to mass combat in the same game.

Regardless of its focus on English myth, Beaumains is very useful for the fantasy gamer. Most of the articles are focused more on how the action and the history combine to tell a story than on how many hit points a monster has. The Summer '94 issue had 44 pages, more material than any digest-sized fanzine.

I don't know if they accept foreign subscriptions yet, but if you're interested, write to them at: Beaumains, c/o Gareth Jones, 69 Atherley Road, Southampton, England, SO15 5DT.

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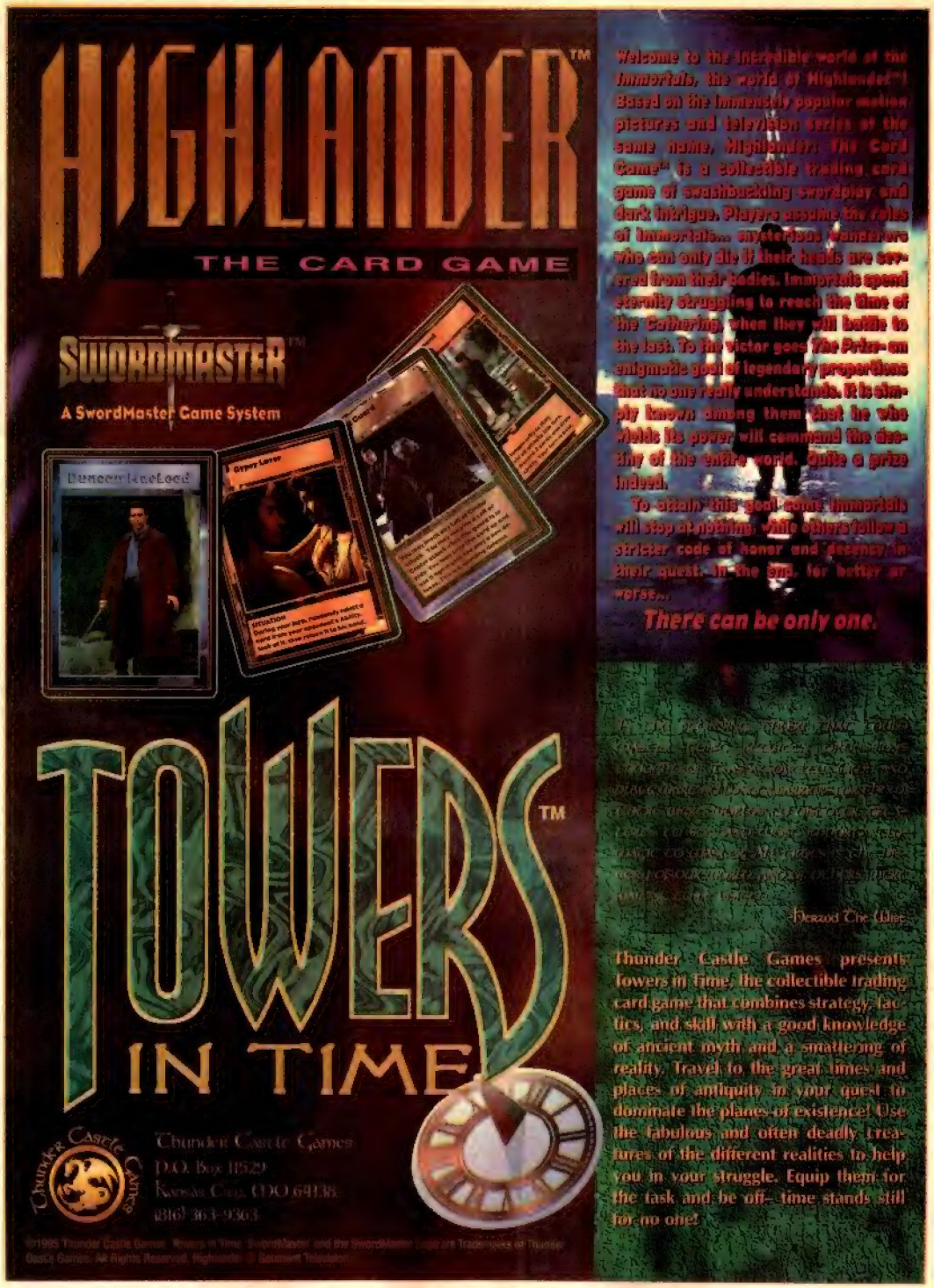
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Claymore

Publisher: Arctic Ranger Production
Editor: Antti Poussa
Frequency: Quarterly
Country: Finland

This begins the look at non-English game magazines. I got a letter in English from Antti Poussa, the editor of **Claymore,** but the magazine is in Finnish. Thankfully, because of that letter, the publisher and address information is accurate.

Claymore is the second best selling game magazine in Finland. The color, fantasy cover art is pretty good, if not amazing. The black and white interior art is admirable and quite professional.

Most of Claymore is generic, without statistics or specific game-related facts and figures. Besides generic fantasy, they also covered **Wraith** by *White Wolf*, **Nephilim** by *Chaosium*, **Runequest** by **AH, Magic: The Gathering** and **AD&D** (and I don't need to tell you who makes them). They also have a science fiction comic called 2300 AD, which is apparently about a space station. This issue had one article that looked, by the diagrams, to be a description of how crossbows work.

You can tell European magazines from American ones by the little things. On the back of Claymore were pictures of several dozen trading cards. Most were Magic, but one had nude women on it.

Claymore can be contacted at: Arctic Ranger Production, Harjutie 19 E 27, Fin-33430 Vuorentausta, Finland. Normally I don't give e-mail addresses out, but it might help in this case, so the editor's e-mail address is tranpou@uta.fi.

Biborhold

Country: Hungary

Fortunately, I have four **Biborholds** to look through. By the name of the city in which it is published, Budapest, I have to assume it's from Hungary.

The cover art on all four issues are from Angus McBride, the artist who did all those covers for *ICE's* **MERP** and **Rolemaster** series. The interior art is nowhere near the same level. Most of it is sketchy, amateur work. In later issues, it gets better, but since I recognize some of it from game products, maybe it's copied. The layout is clean and simple.

Some of the games Biborhold covers include: **Middle Earth RolePlaying, Earthdawn, Ravenloft, AD&D, Shadowrun, Call of Cthulu, Greyhawk, Dangerous Journeys,** and even **Macho Women With Guns** and **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** There are plenty of full-color ads by *FASA*, *GDW* and ICE, so I assume Biborhold has a fairly wide distribution. Biborhold has dungeons, table, maps and charts. Some of the articles seem to be describing locations and monsters, outside of a scenario.

The last one I have has two amusing cartoons in the back; one is an Alien brushing his inner set of teeth, and the other is a Beholder shying away from a dentist. Here is an attempt at the address: Biborhold, 1072 Budapest, Nagydiofa utca 5. They list their telephone numbers as 268-0170, 268-0319 and 268-0320. Their fax line is 121-3797.

Excalibur

Editor: Lucrezia Caporizzi
Country: Italy

This hefty Italian magazine is part science fiction and part gaming, but most of the sci-fi is only added for use in games. There is a lot of **Star Wars** material in the issue I have, but it's all for **Star Wars: The RPG.** Excalibur has industry news from well-known game companies like *Avalon Hill* and *Games Workshop*, but it also discusses comic releases by *Image* and *Dark Horse*, as well as cards by *Topps*.

The first article is on the construction of swords. What is fascinating is that the article blends into other articles for almost the entire issue, describing swords from many mythos, including Excalibur from **Pendragon,** Stormbringer and Mournblade from *Elric of Melnibone*, Durlindana from the book *The Age of Charlemagne*, Glamdring from *The Hobbit*, sacrificial blades from **Call of Cthulhu** and Light Sabers from Star Wars. Each has pictures, discussions and stats for each sword.

Excalibur has an adventure insert in the middle of the magazine printed on parchment-like paper. This issue had two adventures, one generic fantasy and the other for **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.** The computer-drawn maps were attractive and probably very beneficial for the GM. There were also many game reviews, most of which were for the main subject of the issue, Star Wars.

The address for this "adventure games magazine" is: Excalibur, c/o Stratelibri, Via Paisiello 4, 20131 Milano, Italy.

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Making the Scene

A Dozen Things That Are Big About the Small Press

By Spike Y. Jones © 1995

In the **Zine Scene** column, SHADIS has been reviewing small press magazines for over a year, and in the less-regular **Other Rags** column, it has been providing contact information about many of them periodically. But when I talk to other gamers about these small press productions, many have never heard of them, or think that their lower production values and unofficial status make them less interesting to gamers than the big name professional magazines like **Dragon** and **White Wolf**. Having just finishing my 102nd monthly contribution to the **Alarums & Excursions** APA, I have a slightly different opinion (and it's scary to think that, after over eight years of articles, I've still been involved with **A&E** for less than half of its life; it's actually older than Dragon!) There are a number of reasons why gamers might want to supplement (or even replace) their big magazine diets with a sampling of the small press, and after a discussion of the different types of small press magazine, I'll present an even dozen of them.

Coming To Terms

In general, there are three different types of small press magazines: APAs, fanzines and small press professional magazines (prozines). There are many other names given to amateur or small press magazines (such as newsletters, newszines or gazetteers), but in general, these are merely variants of those three categories.

The easiest of the three to understand is the fanzine. This is a magazine or newsletter produced mainly for the reading pleasure of a small group of fans of a particular game system or genre, usually without significant amounts of advertising (and when there are ads, they tend to be strongly

identified with the locale of the publisher, such as business card-size ads for the comic book and game stores in the area). Fanzines are rarely produced on anything more complicated than a photocopier, and often lose money for the publisher. Many of the articles in each issue tend to be written by the editor, and although they also accept submissions from the outside world, these submissions are never paid for (except maybe in free copies of the fanzine, or extensions to a subscription.)

A small press professional magazine (or, incorrectly, semi-pro magazine) is exactly what its name implies: a magazine with a small circulation that's attempting to make it into the big time as a professional magazine. Often, these small prozines evolve out of fanzines, and even if they become successful, during the transition period it's difficult to distinguish them from true fanzines.

As a writer, I consider the point of differentiation to be the moment when the fanzine begins to offer payment (however small) for articles, but as a reader, attempts to improve production quality (the introduction of glossy color-covers, better printing methods, the use of desktop-publishing software to improve the appearance and layout of the text, *etc.*) and to weed out some of the lowest quality article submissions are generally the most important differences between these and fanzines.

The APA, or "Amateur Press Association" (or sometimes "...Alliance,") is a strange fanzine variant. Basically, it consists of a number of fanzines produced by its contributors, which are then bound together by a central collator and redistributed to the contributors: you write one fanzine, mail it to the collator, and get a dozen or more fanzines back in a few weeks (which means that each issue tends to be as thick as a small stack of other fanzines put together).

The content of each contributor's "zine" is entirely up to him, although some APAs are concerned with a particular game system, and contributors are expected to at least pay lip-service to that concern. Some zines are produced by the contributors (who do their own photocopying and just send the zines to the collator to be sorted and stapled together), while the collators of others take a more active role: retyping, copying and otherwise enabling contributions. Some APAs only allow subscriptions to contributors, while others print extra copies for non-contributing (or "silent") subscribers, with the subscription price helping to pay for the materials costs of the other members.

Besides these oddments, the biggest difference between APAs and other fanzines is chat: after the article portion of each contributor's zine, he usually continues on with comments about all the other zines in the previous issue, commenting on both the game material printed and the people producing it (*i.e.*, writers sometimes carry on open personal conversations about day jobs, life events such as marriages and the birth of children, and personal gaming experiences, that can span months or years because of both the longevity of some APAs and the delay between the publication of issues).

To someone looking at this from the outside, it's all very strange, but once someone has been immersed in an APA for a few issues (either as a contributor or as a silent subscriber), it becomes very natural: somewhat like a computer bulletin board system, but with a much slower turnaround and generally more stable membership.

Now that *that's* out of the way, why would a gamer want to buy one of the things (or even worse - want to write for one of them)?

Focus

One problem with the big magazines that try to cover all of gaming is that they can alienate a reader who isn't interested in some aspect of the hobby; if you only play **AD&D**, then magazine coverage of **GURPS** or **Torg** isn't going to interest you much, while coverage of Play-By-Mails and **Magic: the Gathering** might actually turn you off. And if your favorite system isn't one of the top sellers, like **Over The Edge** or **Shattered Dreams**, then you'll have to search a lot to find any coverage at all of your favorite game system.

Many APAs and fanzines are devoted to a single game system (although discussion in APAs tends to stray from the topic a lot,) giving the maximum in support for the game with the minimum of "extraneous" material. Using the examples of **OTE** and **Shattered Dreams**, both of these games have fanzines devoted specifically to them, giving fans an immediate avenue for ideas, adventures and even just conversation with other gamers who speak the same game language.

Coverage

In the opposite direction, there's the question of the amount of space the big magazines devote to the products of small game companies (and a cynic might point out that these companies can't afford to advertise in the big magazines as another reason why their games don't get much coverage). Even if the small game company doesn't encourage the production of a fanzine entirely dedicated to their system, if they have fans out there, one of them is bound to mention this new game system in a fanzine or APA somewhere.

Along with reviews of these small press games, true devotees of a system will print variant rules, write-ups of past adventures and new supplemental material for the game, not caring whether their articles are reaching a large and eager audience. If you're interested in hearing about new game systems that are unlikely to be mentioned in the big press productions, a sampling of small press magazines will give you numerous examples.

Bias

Small press publications are a great source of reviews, for both big game systems (*e.g.*, the latest **Shadowrun** module) and obscure small press games. Moreover, since the writer in a fanzine doesn't have to worry about upsetting an advertiser, hurting someone's feelings, or presenting an opinion that doesn't match that of the majority of gamers, he can afford to present harsh, negative reviews of bad products.

If he prints a review that praises a product, he can do so without raising suspicions that the level of praise is related to the size

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of the company's ads in the magazine. And in the case of fanzines and APAs, there can be more than a single review of a product (by different contributors), with different biases that - together - can give a more rounded look at a game than any single review in a prozine.

Authority

Or, to be more accurate, the complete lack of authority. While some fanzines might be sanctioned by the company that publishes its "primary" game (such as **KAGE**, the *FASA*-sanctioned **Shadowrun** 'zine), most fanzine material isn't "official." So while it lacks something as a result (*i.e.*, it won't be referred to in official supplements to the game, *etc.*), it benefits from the fact that it won't be straight-jacketed into a company's official mold. It can be racier or bloodier, it can mix elements of different game systems together, or even take a wild leap away from the official game universe or setting (say, by killing off a major NPC, or changing the background political structure of a country).

Cost

While they're often skinny, they are also usually cheap, sometimes less than a dollar an issue, which is definitely within most gamers' budgets. The professional magazines offset their high-quality appearance and larger size by their huge sales volume, the number of ads they contain and (in the case of magazines produced by companies that also put out other game products) by subsidies from other profit-making parts of the company.

Small press magazines don't have any of these advantages (although some readers might take the lack of advertising as an advantage in its own right), but they do have something the others don't: they are usually a labor of love for the publisher, who is willing to lose some of his own money with each issue in order just to get the material into print. APAs are a similar case, as the writers pay for their own submissions, making each individual's contribution a mini-labor-of-love-fanzine all its own. Some fanzines don't even cost the reader a penny: they're available for trade, allowing one fanzine editor to trade copies with another for no cost beyond postage, or readers to submit articles, artwork, or letters of comment in exchange for free copies.

Growth Potential

There is a chance, however slim, that a small press magazine will make the move to the big time, with you as a reader or contributor in on the ground floor. In recent years both **White Wolf** and SHADIS have grown from fanzines into big prozines, while other fanzines (such as **Silver Griffin**) are struggling to do the same. Even **Dragon Magazine** started off as a fanzine (**The Strategic Review**).

While it's nice as a writer to have your name tied to a rising star, as a gamer, you can still benefit from this move in two ways: if you support a small magazine until it's big, you'll have another interesting prozine to read, and if you manage to buy a lifetime subscription when the fledgling magazine is cheap and struggling, you'll be well-set when it's big and expensive.

Secrecy

One problem that many GMs have with the major magazines is that they can't use adversaries or adventures printed in them without fear that the players in his campaign will see the same articles. But it's unlikely that more than a single person in a gaming group will subscribe to a given fanzine, and since few stores carry small press publications, non-subscribers are unlikely to pick up copies from other sources. In general, one member of the group will subscribe, then let the rest of the group look through the new issue at the next game session. Thus, if the GM sees an interesting new monster in the latest issue of some APA, he can add it to his next adventure without having to worry about the players learning its weaknesses in advance.

Inspiration

Conversely, every GM has created at least one novel monster, magic item or interesting NPC or adventure. But the vast majority of these will remain solely within those GMs campaigns because they don't think that a big magazine like **Dragon** would print them. And they may be right. But the small press is an excellent way to get these new ideas in print.

Fanzines and APAs are sure-fire ways to get articles printed, as they usually accept whatever is submitted to them. Small prozines can accept or reject articles just like the big boys, but are still more likely to do the former than the latter simply because of the limited number of submissions they receive. The odds are with the writer; he might get a bit of recognition or money, and if he keeps at it, his writing and idea-creating skills will likely improve to the point that the big magazines *will* be interested in his work.

Testing the Waters

Although they cost the writer money (generally the production costs of his zine,) APAs are an excellent forum for a beginner because they give him feedback on his article in the form of comments an issue later. If an APA writer's work is good, other writers will let him know it, while bad writing will be followed-up by complaints or (in the better APAs) constructive criticism.

And while it costs money to print an article in an APA, if the article's good, the author can use the comments of the other APA writers to polish it up a bit before submitting it to one of the paying magazines.

New Voices

In fact, a lot of big writers (myself immodestly included) got their starts in small press magazines. My own second professional sale, an April Fool's article in an issue of **Dragon** some years ago, had appeared previously in a British fanzine (there are many more fanzines in Britain than in the U.S. for some reason) and in an American APA. Even my first sale to SHADIS, an **Underground** article in #16, appeared in **A&E** a year before.

In the small press, you get fresh new authors instead of the stale old ones that sometimes inhabit the big magazines. Or, if

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No. 22

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you prefer, you can see tomorrow's big names today, when they're just fans and players like you. But even if the people whose material you read in small press magazines never become famous, they will at least have different styles, opinions and ideas than those you'll see in the big magazines.

Outside Attention

Some APAs and fanzines are actually read by important people in the gaming industry (for example, the **Alarums & Excursions** APA is read by staff at *TSR*, *Steve Jackson Games*, and other companies, and its contributors even include staff members at *Atlas Games*, *Wizards of the Coast*, and others.) Thus, writing for one of these magazines puts your name in front of industry bigwigs, and if your work is good it might capture the attention of someone who can do something with your work.

Just from within the pages of A&E, I know of some writers who managed to snag book contracts with no more of a track record than having written in the APA. I even know of one writer who printed material about his campaign in **A&E** and was approached *by the game company* to write a book on the subject. Even if you aren't the writer who obviously benefits from this attention, as a mere reader, you may be treated to the sight of pre-publication versions of game articles or worlds, and you might gain insights into those settings lost to people who only see the commercial material when it's finally released.

Inside Info

Along with seeing first-draft versions of professionally published material, there's another advantage to the appearance of professional game designers (or hangers-on) in the small press: gossip. Especially in the APAs, but to a lesser extent in fanzines (mostly because fanzines tend to have fewer pros writing for them), industry insiders can spread rumors, talk about upcoming projects, and generally carry themselves as if they were having a semi-private, face-to-face conversation with a small group of friends and fellow insiders.

Thus, some APA discussions can resemble the "industry news and rumors" columns that appear in some prozines, but they might appear earlier in the small press (because of a shorter lead time between writing and publication,) or in a less censored version. If you enjoy the industry gossip columns in the prozines, you'll love reading the same material when it's written by the actual people involved.

Thanks For Your Support

There are lots of other good reasons to read small press publications (such as helping to support a bunch of dedicated editors and writers out there, trying to make their mark in gaming history), but these twelve should be enough to at least explain why SHADIS continues to devote attention to them every issue. ❑

OG

The Role Playing Game

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OG

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Distributor & Retailer Inquiries Welcomed:

Wingnut Games

P.O. Box 1714

Burlingame, CA 94011

(415) 525-0966 FAX (415) 692-0103

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The NON-collectible Card Game

"...all in all, the game is a crack up...definitely a change of pace from the standard games currently on the market."

- The Gamer's Connection

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- The Familiar

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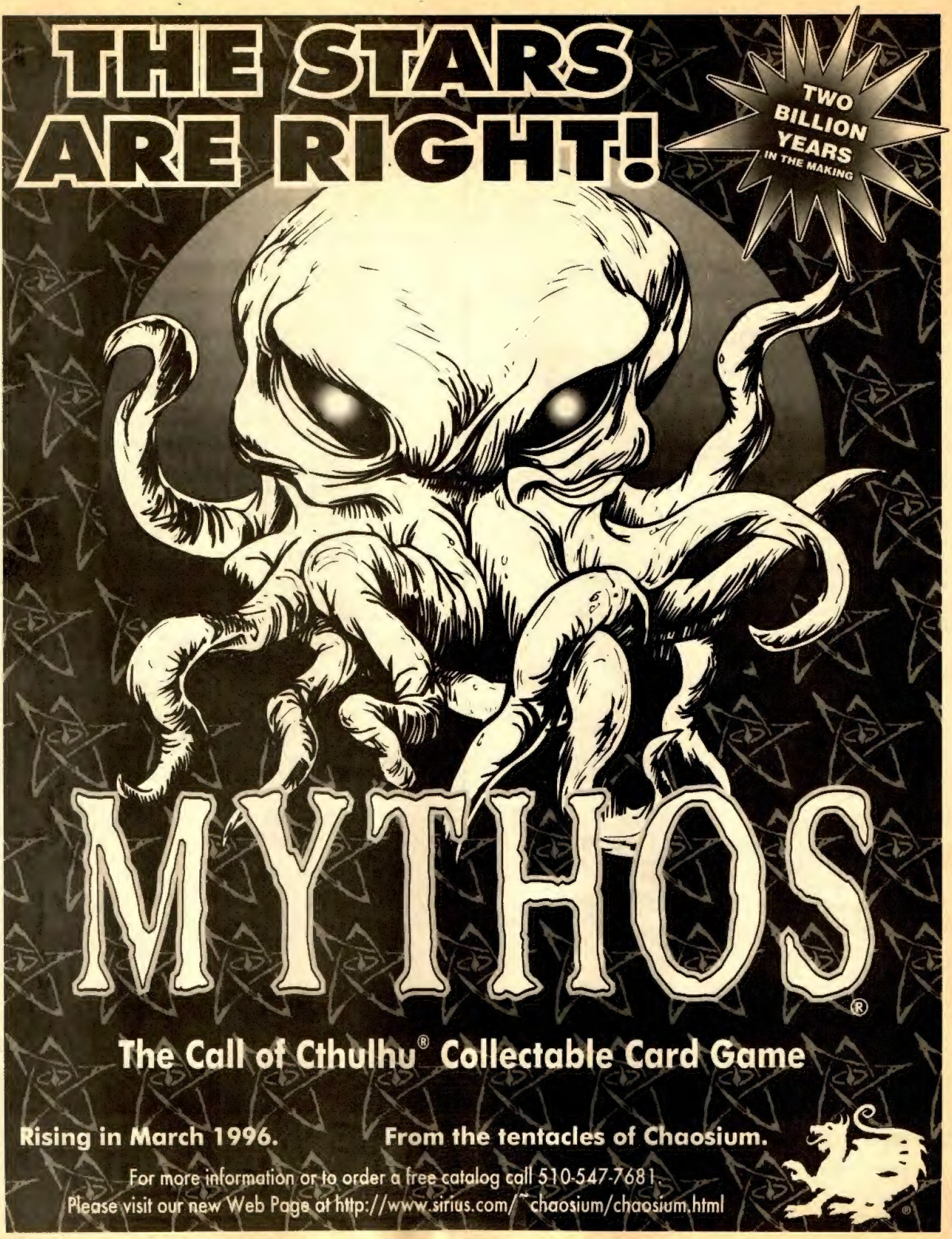
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Other Rags

A Directory of Game-Related Publications

Compiled by Mitch Michaelson

The following are (probably) current addresses of gaming magazines. I have taken them from fairly current issues. Note that I did not include foreign-language or out-of-print zines in this list, even though you can still buy many.

ADVENTURES UNLIMITED
3893 Norfolk St.
Burnaby BC Canada V5G 1E6
General RPG magazine

AUSTRALIAN REALMS
PO Box 220 Morley
Western Australia 6943
General RPG magazine

BEAUMAINS
c/o Gareth Jones
69 Atherley Road
Southampton, SO15 5DT, England
The Arthurian Magazine for Gamers

BERG'S REVIEW OF GAMES
PO Box 567
White Plains NY 10602
Historical wargame review fanzine

CONS UNLIMITED
PO Box 1740, Renton WA 98057-1740
Convention newspaper

THE CRUCIBLE
c/o Loyal G. Parsons, PO Box 4039
Irvine CA 92716
Talislanta fanzine

DUNGEONIER DIGEST
RR #1 Box 81
Flat Rock IL 62427-9735
AD&D fanzine

EARTHDAWN JOURNAL
Sword of the Knight Publications
2820 Sunset Lane #116
Henderson KY 42420
Independent Earthdawn fanzine

ENTERTAINMENT EXCHANGE
PO Box 670
Joplin, MO 64802-0670
Games/comics/collectibles classified advertising newspaper

FLAGSHIP
113 Gable Hill Road
Levittown PA 19057
International PBM magazine

FRACTAL SPECTRUM
17-29 Main St. Suite 316
Cortland NY 13045
PBM gaming fanzine

THE GAMER'S CONNECTION
PO Box 2531
Elk Grove CA 95759-2531
General game reviews & articles

GREY WORLDS
1008 Hillwood Drive
Lewisville TX 75067-5020
ICE house organ

HAYMAKER!
1502 S. 32nd St.
Omaha NE 68105
Hero System APA

IDOLUM QUARTERLY
845 23rd Ave. SE
Minneapolis MN 55414-2607
Quarterly RPG fanzine

IN-COMING FIRE
PO Box 392
Stamford NY 12167
Companion Games house organ

INQUISITOR
PO Box 14485
Santa Rosa CA 95402-6485
Warhammer 40k fanzine

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH
403A N. 8th St.
Columbia MO 65201
Call of Cthulhu/horror magazine

INTERREGNUM
81 Washington St. #2
Malden MA 02148
General roleplaying APA

LOST LEGENDS QUARTERLY
PO Box 362
Logan UT 84323-0362
Darkurthe Legends fanzine

LOUIS PORTER'S FALLOUT
12 Ironwood Dr.
Danbury CT 06811
Warhammer 40k fanzine

LUMINARY
162 Viking Ct. #4
Athens GA 30604
General roleplaying magazine

PAPER MAYHEM
1518 Adams St.
Ottowa IL 61350-4770
Large PBM magazine

PAPYRUS
4823 Flintridge Ct. #2
Rockford IL 61107-5010
RPGs & BBS files

PARALLEL UNIVERSE PARKING
1243 S. 23rd St.
Lincoln NE 68502
Science fiction & fantasy newsletter

PSYCHOBABBLE
c/o Caelen King
Basement Flat, 2 Belvedere Place
D1, Ireland
General RPG fanzine

REALMS OF FANTASY
PO Box 736
Mt. Morris IL 61054
Fantasy fiction newsstand magazine

RE:QUESTS!
4030 Valley View Ln. #233
Farmer's Branch TX 75244-5029
American Mensa RPG SIG newsletter

RENEGADE TRANSMISSIONS
889 Mowry Ave.
Fremont CA 94536
Renegade Legion fanzine

SEDATED
PO Box 20405
Bloomington MN 55420
Shattered Dreams fanzine

SERENDIPITY'S CIRCLE
Wheeality Productions Subscription Dept.
12345 Lake City Way NE, Suite 147
Seattle WA 98125
Weird fantasy and horror RPG fanzine

THE TECH FACTORY
c/o Gregg Dieckhaus
1223 Dunloe
St. Louis MO 63021
Science fiction wargame fanzine

TERROR WATCH
145-B S. McDonough St.
Decatur GA 30030
Bureau 13 fanzine

VALKYRIE
816-818 London Road
Leigh on Sea, Southend
Essex, England, SS9 3NH
General RPG magazine

VORTEXT
1066 28th St.
Oakland CA 94608
General adventure games magazine

THE WORLD BUILDER
PO Box 576
Milton WA 98354
Fanzine for creating RPG worlds and fantasy settings

The next list is of addresses I cannot guarantee. I either haven't read them, got the address from someone else, or don't have a current copy.

ABA PROCEEDINGS
PO Box 119
Limon CO 80828
Traveller fanzine

AD INFINITUM
PO Box 30912
New York NY 10011-0109
How-to articles & general gaming

ADVENTURER'S CLUB
PO Box 1605
Charlottesville VA 22902
Hero Games house organ

ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS
3965 Alla Road
Los Angeles CA 90066
Long-running general game APA

ALL OF THE ABOVE
9071 Dallas St. #D-8
La Mesa CA 91942
GURPS fanzine

ALLIANCE
PO Box 10142
Pittsburgh PA 15232-0142
Star Wars RPG fanzine

ARGHAzine
(Assn. of Roleplaying Gamers of Houston)
11818 Palmsprings Dr.
Houston TX 77072
Club newsletter

BLACK MOLE
69 Atherley Rd.
Shirley Southhampton
S01 5DT ENGLAND
Multi-genre

CAR-PGa Newsletter
11 E. 5th Bonham TX 75418
Game organization newsletter

CHALLENGE
PO Box 1646
Bloomington IL 61702-1646
GDW house organ

THE CHARACTER CHRONICLES
417 Adams SE
Albuquerque NM 87108
AD&D fanzine

CRYPTYCH
30617 US Hwy 19 N. Suite 700
Palm Harbor FL 34684
General RPG magazine

DRAGON THE
PO Box 111
Lake Geneva WI 53147
The grandaddy of RPG zines

DUNGEON
PO Box 111
Lake Geneva WI 53147
TSR's adventure magazine

ETHER ILLUSTRATED NEWS
101 Hackberry Apt. #1503
Clute TX 77531
Space: 1889 fanzine

FANTAZINE
PO Box 642
Lakewood CA 90714
Fiction & scenarios for world of Tarnak

THE GAME ORACLE
1851 N. Ivar #208
Hollywood CA 90028
Bi-monthly/unknown topic

GAME SHOP NEWS
2339 Milstead Circle
Marietta GA 30066
Promotional tabloid

THE GAMER
1879 E. Orange Grive Blvd.
Pasadena CA 91104
Tabloid gaming magazine

GAMER'S FORUM
800 Emory St. Apt B.
Imperial Beach CA 91932
General roleplaying

THE GUARDSMAN
21611 Park Green Dr.
Katy TX 77450
AD&D fanzine

HEXAGONE
CP 63 succ "M"
Montreal QC HIV 3L6 CANADA
French / English

HIT POINTS
PO Box 2752
Chapel Hill NC 27515-2752
Game organization newsletter

IMPERIAL DISPATCHES
919C Santas Clara Ave.
Alameda CA 94501-3429
Quarterly science fiction miniatures

INTERFACE
919 Santa Clara Ave.
Alameda CA 94501
Cyberpunk 2020 fanzine

JOURNAL OF THE BRITTANIC TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY
21W127 Tee Lane #3
Itasca IL 60143
Space: 1889 fanzine

JOURNEYS
PO Box 1646
Bloomington IL 61702-1646
Dangerous Journeys fanzine

KARMA LAPEL
PO Box 5467
Evanston IL 60204-5267
Newsletter - humor some game related

THE LAST PROVINCE
TFR 45 Duke St.
Edinburgh EH6 8HH ENGLAND
Independent British gaming

THE LILLIPUT GAZETTE
1200 W. 40th St. #238
Austin TX 78756
Crunchy Frog Ent. house organ

MELBOURNE TIMES
2800 NASA Road One #514
Seabrook TX 77586
Earth Colonies Development League newsletter

MINI MOON COMICS
PO Box 647
Westfield IN 46074
Mini-comics company

MOTIVE
190 Reed St.
Athens GA 30605
Multi-genre

PORTABLE GAMEPLAY
1000 East State St.
Lehi UT 84043
Gameboy newsletter

PYRAMID
PO Box 18957
Austin TX 78760
Steve Jackson Games magazine

RECON
649 E St.
PO Box 162
Chula Vista CA 91910
Quarterly boardgame zine

REVELATIONS
PO Box 341136
Los Angeles CA 90034
Fat Messiah Games house organ

SAN JOSE STRATEGIC GAMING SOCIETY MONTHLY
1234 Canary Ln.
San Jose CA 95117
Club newsletter

SCAVENGERS
519 Ellinwood
Osage City SD 66523-1329
Small press magazine

SCRAWLS FROM THE SPRAWLS
PO Box 10097
Glendale CA 91209-0097
Shadowrun-Cyberpunk APA

THE SCROLL
PO Box 14616
Portland OR 97214
Multi-genre

SELF PUBLISHER
Dimestore Stories Productions
PO Box 360041
Strongsville OH 44136
Reviews self-published material

SIGNAL-GK
45 Fairfield Hebden Bridge
West Yorks UK 4X7 6JD
Mega-Traveller fanzine

SILVER GRIFFIN
PO Box 1751
St. Paul MN 55101
General roleplaying

SILVER SWORDS & SORCERY
11685 SR 691
Nelsonville OH 45764
Fantasy RPGs

SOUTHERN AURORA
7 Rupert Ct.
Thomastown Melbourne
Victoria
AUSTRALIA

SPACE GAMER/FANTASY GAMER
PO Box 11424
Burbank CA 91519-1424
Freestyle RPGs

SPINWARD TIMES
823 Ponsard St. Brossard
Quebec CANADA J4W 1W1
Mega-Traveller fanzine

STARSHIPS STARPORTS & VEHICLES
3890 50th St.
San Diego CA 92105-3005
Mega-Traveller fanzine

STARSONG
Rt. 2 Box 260-B
St. Matthews SC 29135
Sci-fi / fantasy anthology

SWORD & BLASTER
2102-B Wexford Dr.
Norcross GA 30071
Atlanta gaming clubs fanzine

TMRGS
598 Thompson Station Rd.
Newark DE 19711-7520
Space: 1889 fanzine

WARPfactor
SU 3213 Williams College
Williamstown MA 01267
Newsletter - mostly GURPS

WHITE DWARF
3431-C Benson Ave.
Baltimore MD 21227-1072
Games Workshop house organ.

WHITE WOLF'S INPHOBIA
4598 Stonegate Ind. Blvd.
Stone Mountain GA 30083
White Wolf Game Studio house organ

The Market Platz

The Market's Open

The Market Platz is a meeting place where readers pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players, etc.

Subscribers may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and a maximum of twenty-five words. Non-subscribers can place ads for 25¢ per word with a limit of twenty-five words.

Convention announcements, group meetings and public service notices can be placed free of charge.

Ads will be placed on a first-come-first-served basis, with subscribers having priority.

Classifieds

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Julie Newmar is a SHADIS reader — shouldn't you be one too?

J.—
You abandoned us. Punk. We will come for you . . .
— The R and D dept.

Spud,

Watch out for them orcs.

#160

SHADIS'S MOST WANTED

SHADIS is looking for the following writers and artists whose addresses have vanished from our files. If you or anyone you know is on this list, please contact the SHADIS offices immediately.

Baichtal, John	Benage, Gregory	Carroll, Dan
Danzig, Ryan	Douglas, Maria A.	Dupuis, Ann
Gabriel, Stephen	Harmon, Michael S.	Iliffe, Bob
Lackey, Chris	Landis, Danyl	Lashley, David
Leeb, Ben	Lewis, Rich	Long, Dave
Lucas, Paul	Merenda, Frank	Morse, Robert
Moyer, Lee	Muir, Shannon	Newton, Dave
Newton, Michelle	Patterson, Steven	Perrin, Don
Prosperi, Louis	Ramond, Victor	Sanderson, Kenneth
Savoie, Pierre	Shaw, David	Spencer-Hale, William
Stelmack, Serge	Stolze, Greg	Tynes, John
Warren, Rich	Wilson, Ann	Wilson, Leonard
Witherspoon, Sebastian		Yates, Dennis

I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together.

Anne,

St. Louis was a blast. When are you coming to California?

Happy Birthday Casey Jägermeister is on the house. John

Isolde –
Far, far away under lonely skies of blue
Far, far away and still dreaming of you.
– Tristan

Layout Staff

Don't forget I am watching... Even at three AM. when you think your [sic. —Layout] alone I know that you plot against me. Revenge will be sweet.....

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SunQuest, PO Box 677069, Orlando, FL 32867-7069.
E-mail on Genie [T.REED10], CompuServe [72337,234], AOL [RFarns].

Playtesters wanted for prototype PBM stellar conquest/colonization game. Two week turnaround. No fee. Contact: Prototype, 1556 Halford Ave. #412, Santa Clara, CA 95051.

Stick Figure Theatre!

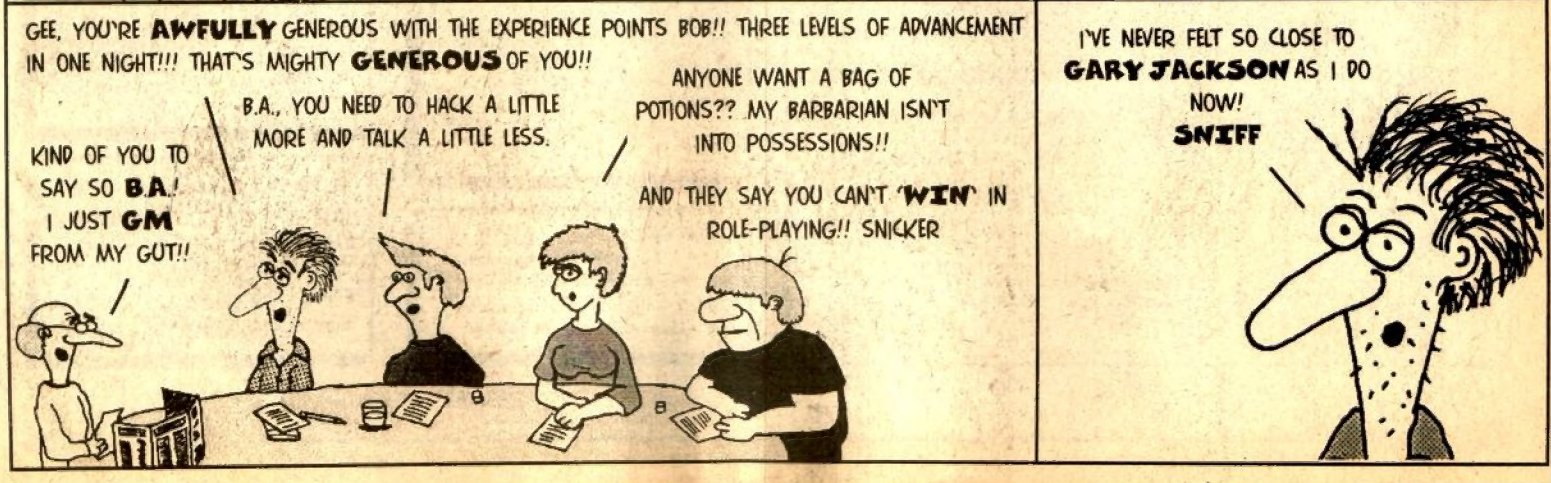
by Chris Avellone

"I don't get it. According to this, there are no booster packs, just these 52 cards, divided into four suits."

Knights of the Dinner Table™

BY JOLLY R BLACKBURN © 1995

NEXT WEEK.....



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...ace who has time to scream?

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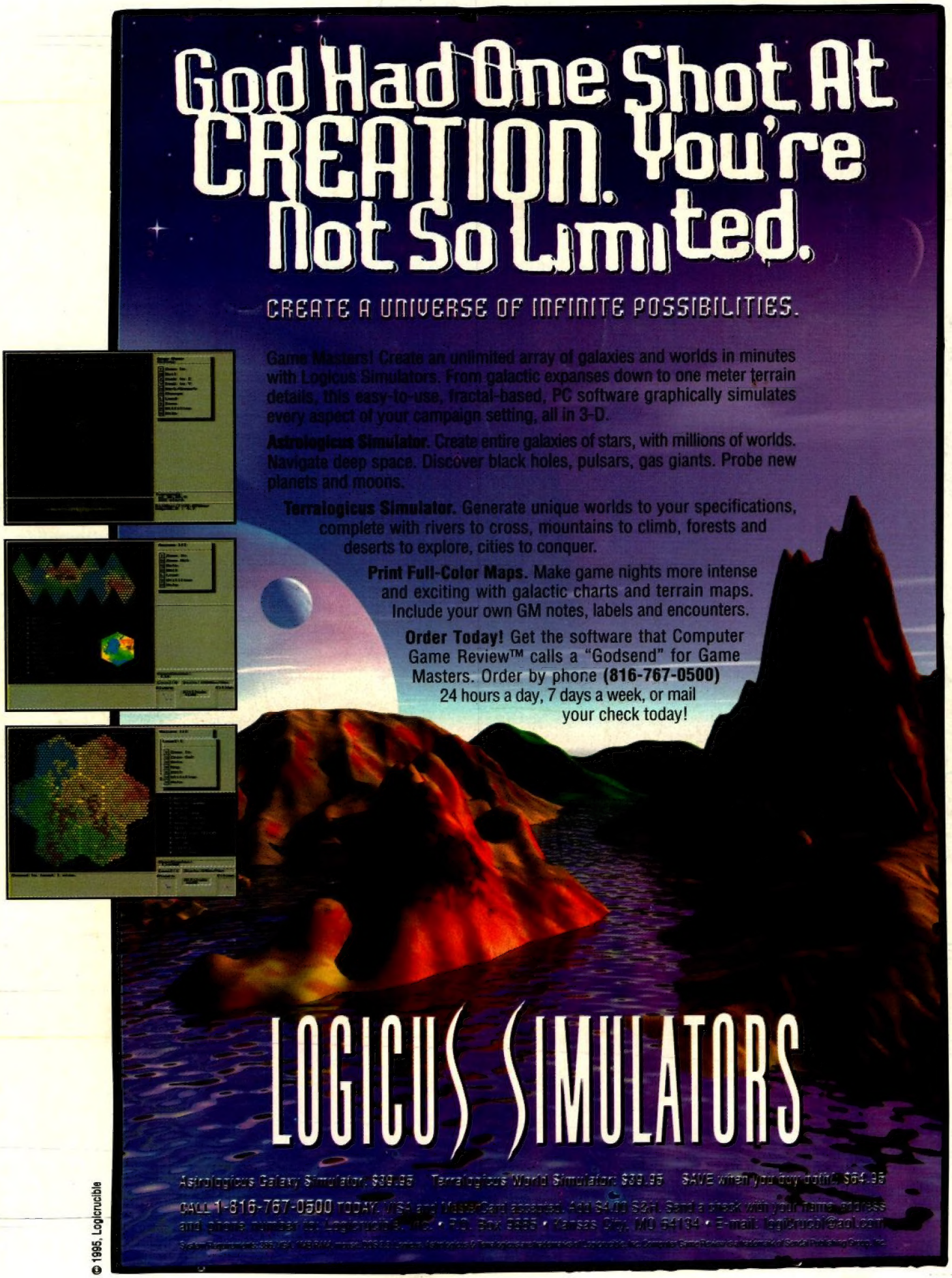
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